

# Go Light

thoughts on primal parenting and the wild child



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*intro:*

welcome to the first issue of 'go light: thoughts on primal parenting and the wild child.' after years of searching for a zine that considered the impact western civilization has on children i decided to just go ahead and make it myself. two years and three unfinished attempts later, here it is.

i have always felt that the dynamics of children are too often overlooked whenever critiques of modern society are advanced. this is troubling as it is these very children after all who stand to inherit this earth after we all wither and become compost. it has been said that the first victim of patriarchy was the reverence held for a womyn's capacity for childbirth. envy replaced esteem. control began to be exerted over wimmins "reproductive rights", and newborns were judged and interacted with according to criteria reflecting a standardized society. the consequences of this disequilibrium can be seen in youngsters throughout our culture today.

this issue is merely an introduction to some basic topics which i hope will encourage further exploration into the myriad of areas that concern western<sup>youth</sup> youth.

upcoming issue themes will likely be: games (early fall), de/un/homeschooling (winter), childbirth (spring), gathering-hunting (summer). quasi-deadline for the next issue is around mid-July so send in your suggestions for native games, cause if i can't have fun i don't want to be a part of your revolution...

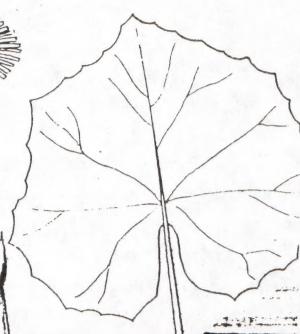
**COLTSFOOT**

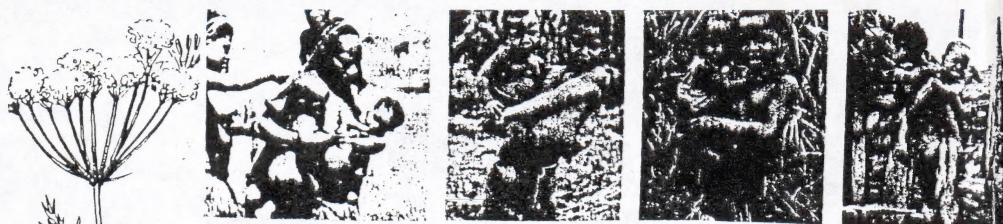
*Tussilago farfara*

Flowers bristly, with numerous yellow rays in layers; stalks with reddish scales. The large basal leaves appear after the flowers. 6-18 in. (15-45 cm). Where found: Waste ground. South to Ohio, Penn., and N.J. Flowers: March-June.

Use: Candy (cough drops), cough syrup, tea, seasoning (salt). An excellent cough syrup or hard candy (cough drop) can be made by boiling the *fresh* leaves and adding sugar to the resultant extract. When making hard candy, add 2 cups of sugar for every cup of extract and boil until the rich syrup forms a hard ball when dropped in cold water. The *dried* leaves can be steeped to make a fragrant tea, or burned and the residue used as a saltlike seasoning.

SPRING-SUMMER





## Primal Parenting



*When the voices of children are heard on the green,  
And laughing is heard on the hill,  
My heart is at rest within my breast,  
And everything else is still.*

~ William Blake

During the past few years, growing interest in alternatives to civilized life has provided the opportunity to introduce and build on the critiques of civilization itself: patriarchy, domestication, alienation, industrialization, etc. Yet there has been relatively little focus on how the imposition of civilization affects children and the various realms of the parent-child relationship (childbirth, rearing, education, family structure... to name a few). Primal parenting attempts to continue a dialogue on what exactly is missing and how it can be reclaimed.

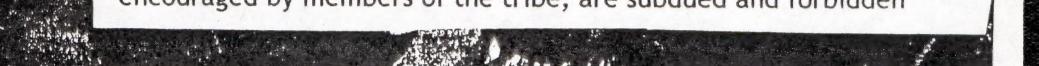
If one wishes to address the "totality" it is best to begin at the beginning - historically speaking this generally falls under various theories: agriculture, symbolic language, patriarchy, surplus. However, if one desires to study the affects it has on a personal level then again the best place to begin is at the beginning - birth. Within the setting of modern medicine (i.e. western science) a fetus is exposed to the civilizing process even before it has a chance to resist. Setting aside for a moment the fact that millions of pregnant wimmin within this society consume super-sized quantities of fast/junk/preserved foods, breathe toxic air, and have no daily direct contact with nature, the earliest assault upon an un-domesticated humyn being takes place within the walled compound of a hospital.

The unmediated experience of a primitive childbirth has been replaced by an authoritarian and controlled delivery. Thousands of years of traditional midwifery have been repressed by a crusade of patriarchal doctors. Healing herbs that spring forth out of the earth have been long-forgotten after generations of synthetic pharmaceutical chemicals. The spontaneous dance of leaves, symphony of songbirds, and chaotic celebration of life that awaited our ancestors' children for millions of years has succumbed to floourescent lighting, sterile metal, and machines that go "ping." The voices of the masked strangers sound unfamiliar to the newborn, they are not the voices of the grandmothers and sisters of the tribe who sat around the campfire singing praise to the unborn.



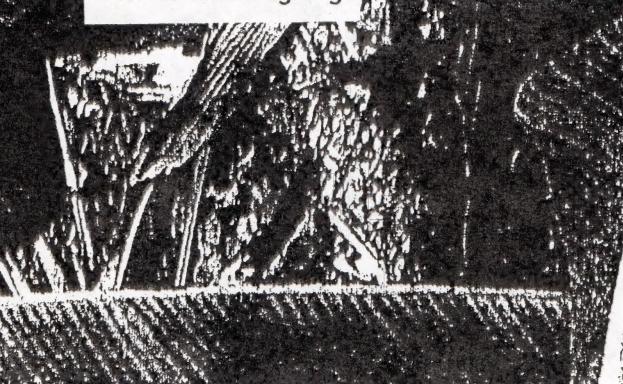
No longer does the child suckle upon it's mothers breast while she gathers nuts and berries carefully describing each plants use. Nor does the child stalk quietly behind watching, observing the nature of the hunt. The thrust of western civilization tore directly into these settings to ensure an orderly row of students memorizing facts about Thomas Jefferson and not the leaf patterns of caraway. Mass-produced preserved cafeteria food does not nourish the child like tasting the flesh of a roasted, wild pheasant. Each day the children live for recess, a brief interval whereby they can briefly catch a glimpse of what has been taken from them.

The family structure is reordered into a pattern predesignated by the techno-industrial social structure as well. The authoritarian patriarchal model of society is reflected in the male-dominated nuclear family. Independence and autonomy in the child, once cultivated and encouraged by members of the tribe, are subdued and forbidden



resulting in generations of confused and despondent adolescents who grow into distressed and alienated adults.

If we desire to create a new world, a rejuvenated world - full of impulsive celebrations of life and death - then we need not only address race or class or gender but age as well. And begin teaching future generations the ways of the old. (Re)Introducing children to edible plants, primitive skills, earth-based celebrations, unschooling, medicinal plants, building shelters, dancing, hunting, planting, singing, gathering, laughing - it's all desperately needed. Hopefully we can use concepts or critiques like "primal parenting" (not Primal Parentism) to reevaluate native, tribal, primitive, land-based, aboriginal, and indigenous ways of parenting and slowly work to heal our own civilized wounds in order to reestablish a culture of vibrant, feral humyns dancing and singing alongside spirited, uncivilized children. Eating berries and laughing.



-whippoorwill-

**"The unfiltered, unpolluted air, the flicker of wild birds, real sunshine and rain, mud to be tasted and tree bark to grasp, the sounds of wind and water—all these are not vague and pleasant amenities for the infant, but the stuff out of which its second grounding, even while in its mother's arms, has begun"**



from 'My Name's Chellis and I'm in Recovery from Western Civilization' by Chellis Glendinning

# Teaching Primitive Skills to Children

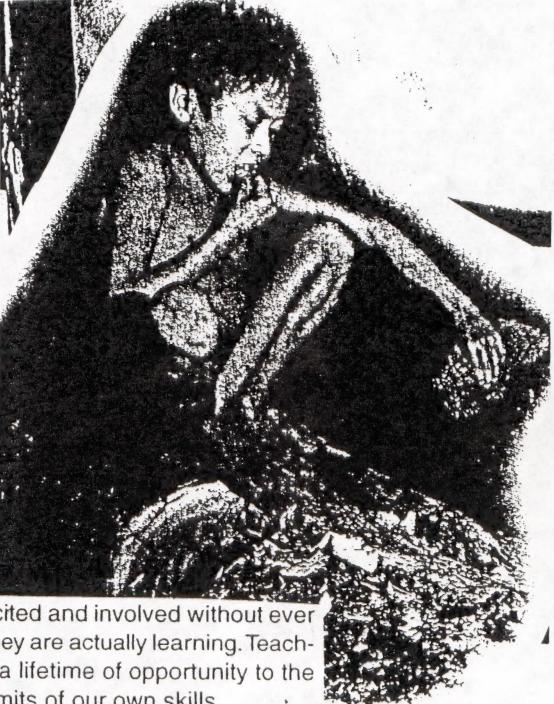
## A Place to Begin

*Text & Photos By Wanda T. De Waard*

Whenever we learn information or skills that truly feed a certain excitement or fire within us, it is only natural to want to share. The give-away is a natural way to be and very much a part of being in a community of like-minded people.

All of us have some form of contact with young people and we can never be totally aware of the impact that we are having. As guardians, educators, or counselors, it seems important to offer them experiences that connect them with life and with the Earth. We want to encourage them to grow, to enjoy, to share and to find a purpose for their lives. Children, being very aware creatures, will copy what we actually do rather than what we try to tell them. Therefore, primitive skills provide the perfect, hands-on activities that keep young people interested, excited and involved without ever realizing what or how much they are actually learning. Teaching these skills will open up a lifetime of opportunity to the children while pushing the limits of our own skills.

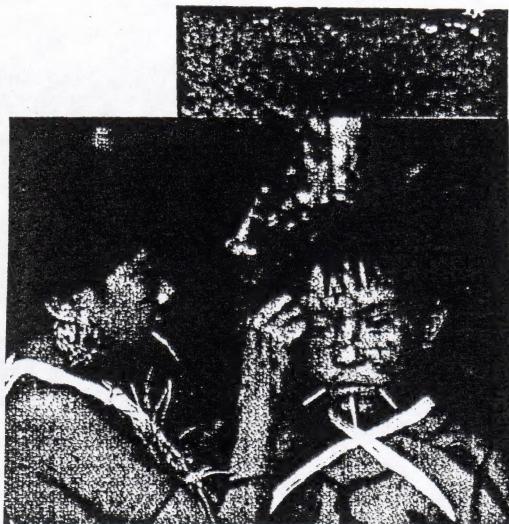
Sharing the knowledge and primitive skills of indigenous people with children can teach them their true connection to the Earth and give them a sense of place that is based on reality. It can encourage them to slow down and concentrate on a task in a world that seems to value speed. The focus on detail and craftsmanship, while pro-



ducing unique-personal tools and skills is a nice alternative to a modern society that seems to value mass production, cutting corners, uniformity and quantity. Primitive activities can encourage a deep level of self-awareness, an awareness of personal interests, talents and tendencies which create a strong desire to continue to learn throughout life. And, sharing with our children brings us closer to their world, their perspectives, feelings, and needs by creating a sense of kinship between generations in a world where community seems non-existent and unimportant. The entire process of sharing, practicing and learning will show our young people that they truly do have choice and are perfectly capable

individuals in a world with overwhelming problems where even adults cannot seem to cope. Primitive skills can be a window into a true sense of freedom based on knowledge, ability and personal integrity. This would truly be a gift to our own children and to generations to come.

Our role as teachers of primitive skills is to offer opportunity. The real teachers are the Earth, the natural materials provided on the landscape, the skills and life itself. So don't wait until you consider yourself an "expert" before you begin to share with the children in your life. It is not necessary to have all of the answers or to master all of the skills. The most important thing is to just get out into nature with them and to begin to share what we do know. As new interests or needs are recognized, we can research and plan.



When teaching primitive skills, we are merely guides. We may have many skills and ideas to share but we cannot force anyone to learn what we have learned. The children may choose to learn or not. Each child will learn what is needed in his or her own way. Our role as adults is to guide, to encourage, to offer opportunities and to keep children safe. We must be consistent, patient and aware. We must share our feelings and our dreams. We want to show the children what is possible and how to head in that direction. Think about the way indigenous people shared with their children, by living, doing and being.

Primitive skills are a great focus and introduction to the world of primitive technology. These skills can bring to the children's attention so many other skills and specialty areas. In many programs, I strive to offer the skills at designated times with everyone in attendance. Then the rest of our day is spent on all the interesting variations and options

offered in related areas such as hide tanning, clothing, rawhide work, rock and bone working, flintknapping, instruments, pottery, basketry, weaving and variations on all of these.

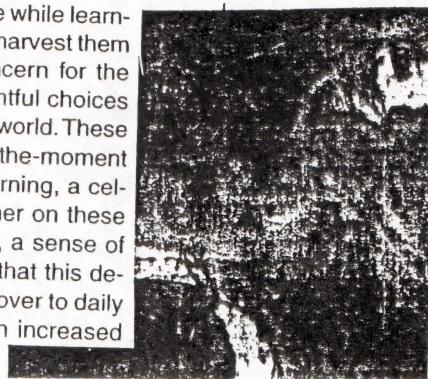
What you will have with a primitive skills program with children is a nice blending of environmental education, recreational skills, kinship and Earth philosophy all mixed with a lot of fun. The effects on the children and the adults



*Safe use of tools as taught at Family Camp.*

involved are far reaching. We live in a fast paced, consumer culture where most of the objects we use are manufactured by others we don't even know. Nor do we often appreciate the effort or the materials used to create these objects. Many items are used and disposed of. Think of what we can encourage by getting children involved with the basic skills, using their imaginations while creating useful objects from natural raw materials. What delight to watch a group of young people be willing to work hard, to take the time, to fall short of perfect with pride enough to try again. It will lead to direct contact with the natural landscape while learning what materials to collect and where, how to harvest them and appreciate them. This can lead to a concern for the Earth, a personal commitment to make thoughtful choices in one's life regarding the impact on the natural world. These skills and activities keep us so absorbed, so in-the-moment and can bring on a commitment to lifelong learning, a celebration and enjoyment of life. Working together on these activities, children develop a sense of kinship, a sense of place in a community of people. It is possible that this desire to create and nurture community will carry over to daily life. And primitive skills lead our children to an increased

level of awareness of the uniqueness of self, their relationship to each other and to the Earth. They might begin to recognize that the Earth truly does provide everything they need in life and is a remarkable teacher for them. And, they just might begin to recognize their unique human role as a toolmaker along with the lifestyle, the responsibility and the joy that accompanies it.



*Here are some simple guidelines to consider  
when sharing with children either  
individually or in groups:*

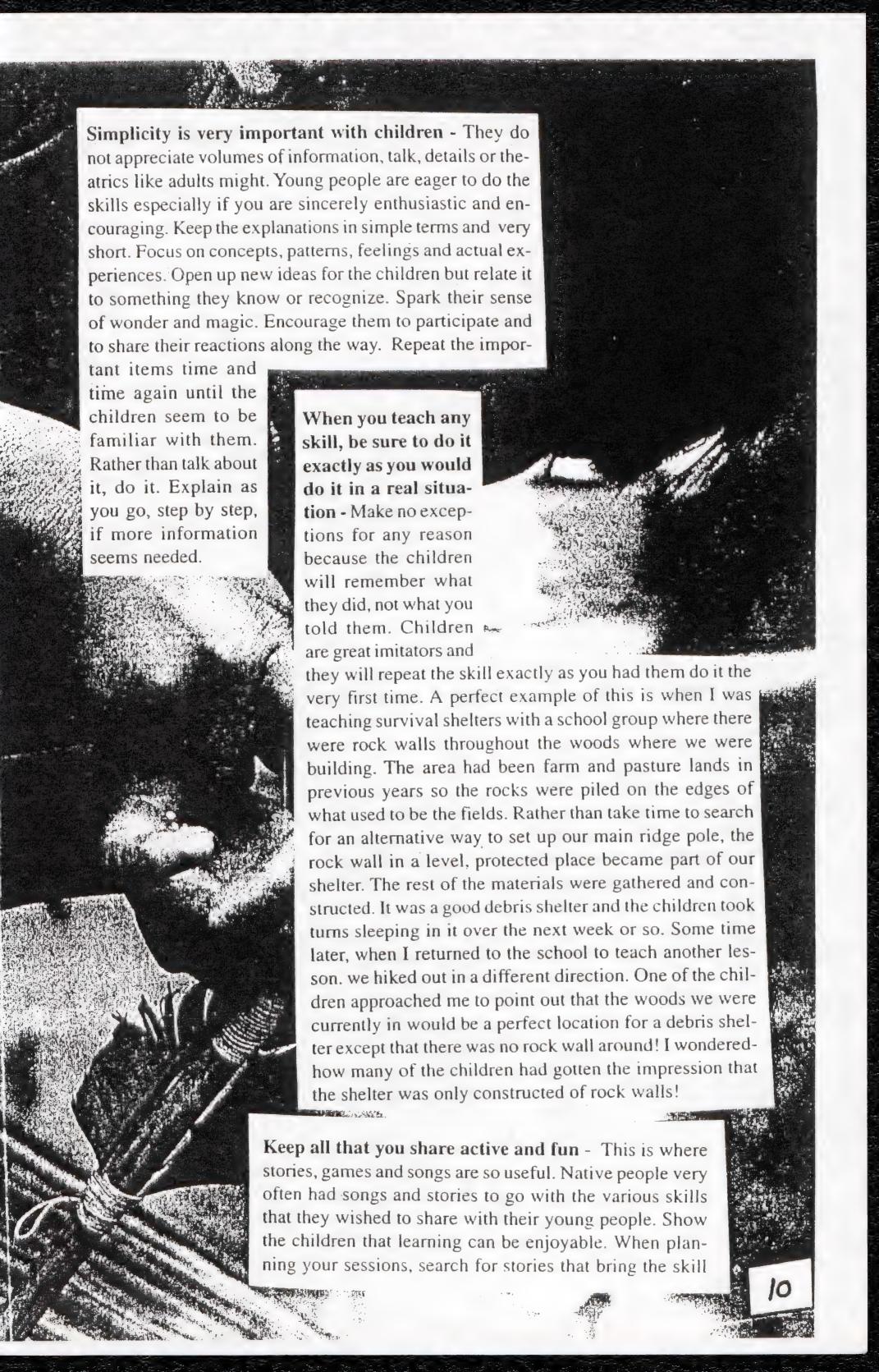
**Just be yourself** - A child is quick to recognize contrived behaviors or lessons. Don't pretend to be something or someone other than who you really are. Don't depend on anyone else for credibility. It is okay to admit that you do not know or have not done something. Let's get rid of the "expert" or "authority" syndrome that we all seem to buy into. Let's not lead our children into a life of searching for the expert or the proper authority when all of the answers they really need are right out there on the landscape and right within their own hearts. It seems much more productive to show the young people real skills, real possibilities and how each of us as an individual has explored or developed them.

**Believe in what you are doing and enjoy it or don't consider sharing it.**

**Prepare and plan as much as possible so that you can be spontaneous and flexible** - Practice skills and learn as much as your time allows. Make a plan so that you have a sense of direction but be ready to modify the plan when responding to the children and the situation. All of your planning, learning and practice will allow you to continue in a playful, knowledgeable and skilled way.

**Offer what you have to share in an understanding and respectful way** - The child will learn. Just open the way. Let him or her find it. Let things happen. Get yourself (ego) out of the way. In other words, get your plan started and then let go of what you want or prefer. It may not and probably will not go as you would hope but that's okay. You will not be able to control everything that happens even if you try. If any type of group will throw you, children will. Real learning takes place creatively and spontaneously so go with it and apply all of your knowledge, skill and energy as best you can. Eventually, all of what you had planned to share and even more will come out anyway. Teaching or sharing is really like a circle. You are not working on the child or the student as much as you are actually working on yourself. Opening yourself up to teaching and sharing has a magical way of pushing and stretching you to let go and to give your best. Welcome it. Listen and learn. The more you share with children, the more you will learn and it becomes a wonderful, powerful circle. It is a way of seeing and a way of life.





**Simplicity is very important with children** - They do not appreciate volumes of information, talk, details or theatrics like adults might. Young people are eager to do the skills especially if you are sincerely enthusiastic and encouraging. Keep the explanations in simple terms and very short. Focus on concepts, patterns, feelings and actual experiences. Open up new ideas for the children but relate it to something they know or recognize. Spark their sense of wonder and magic. Encourage them to participate and to share their reactions along the way. Repeat the important items time and time again until the children seem to be familiar with them. Rather than talk about it, do it. Explain as you go, step by step, if more information seems needed.

**When you teach any skill, be sure to do it exactly as you would do it in a real situation** - Make no exceptions for any reason because the children will remember what they did, not what you told them. Children are great imitators and

they will repeat the skill exactly as you had them do it the very first time. A perfect example of this is when I was teaching survival shelters with a school group where there were rock walls throughout the woods where we were building. The area had been farm and pasture lands in previous years so the rocks were piled on the edges of what used to be the fields. Rather than take time to search for an alternative way to set up our main ridge pole, the rock wall in a level, protected place became part of our shelter. The rest of the materials were gathered and constructed. It was a good debris shelter and the children took turns sleeping in it over the next week or so. Some time later, when I returned to the school to teach another lesson, we hiked out in a different direction. One of the children approached me to point out that the woods we were currently in would be a perfect location for a debris shelter except that there was no rock wall around! I wondered how many of the children had gotten the impression that the shelter was only constructed of rock walls!

**Keep all that you share active and fun** - This is where stories, games and songs are so useful. Native people very often had songs and stories to go with the various skills that they wished to share with their young people. Show the children that learning can be enjoyable. When planning your sessions, search for stories that bring the skill



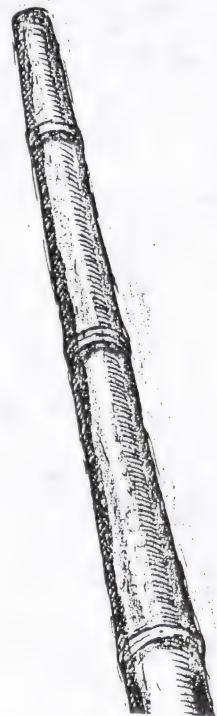
to life. Songs can provide a rhythm and a tempo for getting the task done. Games are useful for teaching skills and concepts without ever having to say much at all.

**Trust that the children will learn much more from your example and behavior than you will ever know** - Always remind yourself that your role is to provide an opportunity to learn and that is all. It may seem nothing is being accomplished that you had intended either with the whole group or, more often with a certain individual. It's okay. You're

planting seeds that may not sprout for a long time and whose fruit you may never see. If you believe in what you are sharing, then it does not matter. Watch the children closely, notice their behavior, moods, interests, talents and encourage each individual. Listen to them for they have much wisdom to share with you.

**for all** - All guidelines should be open to negotiation and discussion. Children need to feel included in creating their own living and learning situations. They can be far more perceptive than most adults suspect and the guidelines they create themselves will be more effective than anything you could have designed or attempted to impose. So, be careful not to have any more guidelines than are necessary and to include the children in the establishment of these rules from the very beginning of your time together. Present an initial set of rules. Everyone involved, adults and children alike, must discuss, change and agree to each and every rule before proceeding. They might even add one or two. Then, be firm and consistent when following these guidelines. If, during the time that you have together, a certain rule is not working, it is important to take the time to discuss it and rework it until it is useful for everyone.

**After each session with children, take a few quiet moments to process what happened** - Consider what seemed to really work for you. What did you like about what you did? What would you do differently the next time? Brainstorm a list of personal insights or lessons to cherish. Be grateful for having had the opportunity to participate and contribute as you did. And in your heart, in your own way, honor each child and how he or she participated and contributed to the situation.



from 'Fiddleheads and Mustard Blossoms'

by Catherine Derevitzky



Hazel nuts  
(*Corylus avellana*)

Small, round nuts with a leafy husk that grow on bushes by many roadsides. The sweet nuts ripen in late August and hang on the bush till late fall. Although it is usually a race with the squirrels as to who picks them first.



"Whoa!" She's pointing towards the ground. Lips pursed. She withdraws her finger and glances sideways at me to make sure I've understood her. I stop surveying the woods, "What have you found?" Her head resumes the previous position: staring towards her feet, chin buried into her chest. Silent focus. Her little eyebrows furrow, "...Whoa."

I look again. Nothing but a scattered pile of brown leaves. I assume she's spotted a unique leaf of some sort and, in a selfish attempt to try to get her moving along, I mutter, "Oh, yeah....that's a pretty leaf. C'mon, honey."

She's undeterred.

"Whoa..."

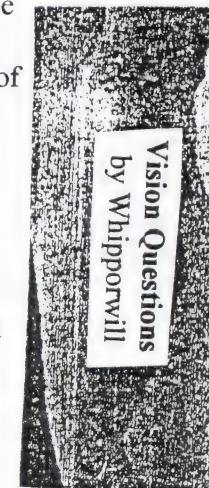
Unshouldering my bag, I walk over to where she's squatting and lean over her, starring intensely. Still nothing.

There are hundreds of shades of brown. I still can't tell what she's looking at. Leaf patterns? An insect perhaps? I stare for a while but nothing appears to move.

Quickly both her hands slap her belly - an expression of happiness. I don't understand, she has never been this excited over leaves before. Since we moved out here we've had a 70 acre backyard and have taken her for daily hikes through the woods. Her mother constantly handing her flowers to smell, grasses to feel, leaves to hold, berries to savor. We have made every attempt to ensure that her early experiences were nature-based interactions. And though she has grasped and studied many leaves over the past year, she has never displayed such enthusiasm. No, there is something more here. And non-verbally she is trying to tell me.

I step next to her and crouching down realize that I am still too far away. I get on my hands and knees dropping my head.

Vision Questions  
by Whipporwill



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immediately [Holmberg]."

Is this the primal eye? Has this interaction been her way of revealing what I have lost? Reaching to remove a twig that landed on my hat, I can't help but marvel at her awareness. The way she observes, undistracted. Without hesitation, without judgement.

Once again I am seeing the earth through the eyes of a child. It has taken over a quarter of a century to catch this brief glimpse and it simply leaves me speechless.

During her time spent with the Yequana, Jean Leidloff marveled at the way they could, "select the form of a small bird in the shadows of a wall of jungle where one of us can only see leaves, even after they have pointed to the place [Leidloff]."

My daughter has taught me how to see.

The feeling is oddly familiar though as I spent very little time outdoors after the age of eight - that was the year our family bought a VCR. Two years later it was a Nintendo for Christmas. By the time I was 14, we had a computer and I fought tooth and nail any attempt to urge me outside to play.

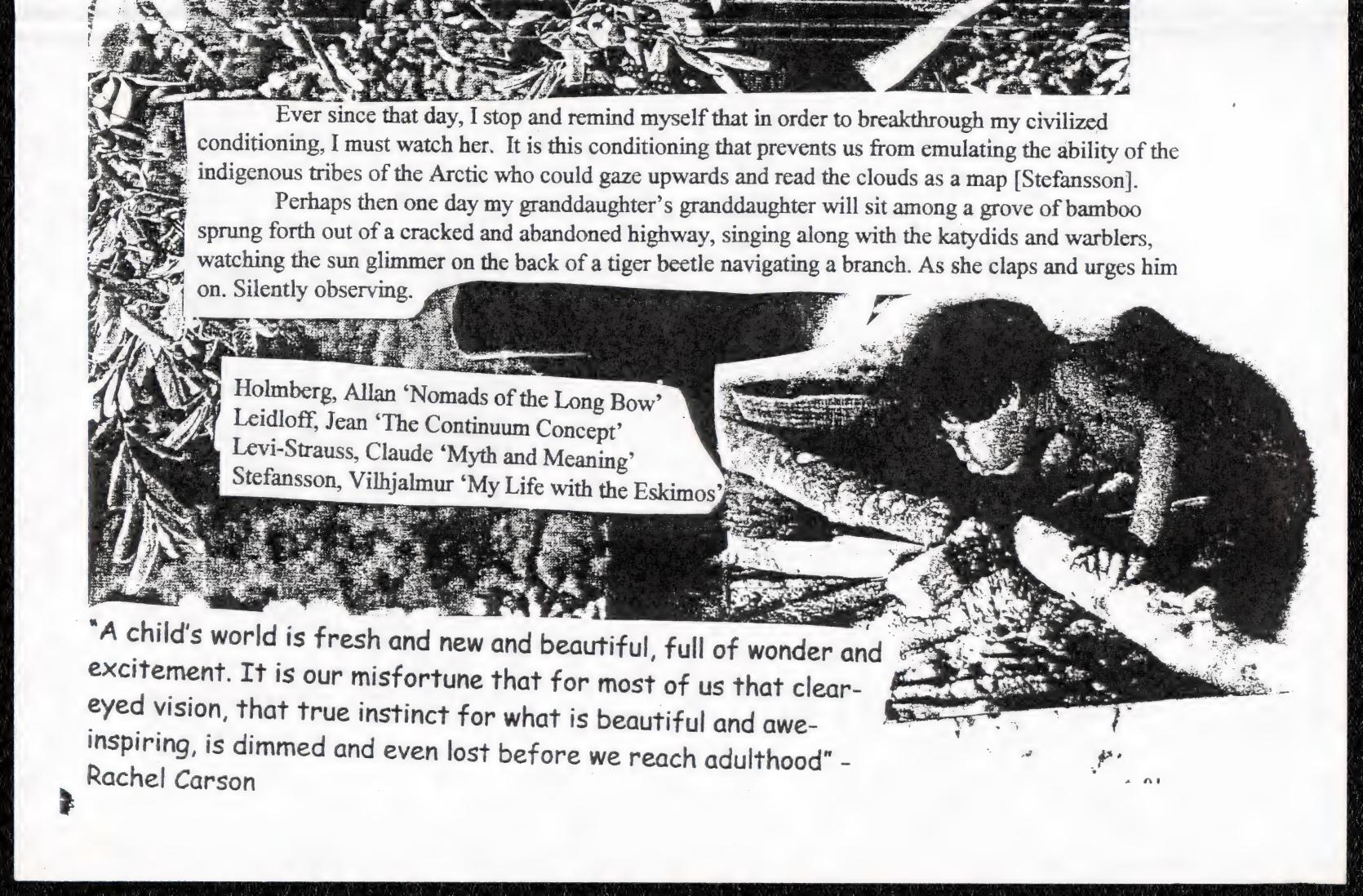
Two decades of lighting-quick advertisement flickers and dazzling pixel flashes has left me unable to actually *see* anymore. I can only passively watch.

How can I protect her from the imminent onslaught of billboards, florescent lights, and brand names? The primal eye is how 99% of our ancestors viewed the world. I fear that no matter what she will loose this amazing ability. My eyes swell up and I feel defeated.

I can't even begin to comprehend the ability to "see the planet Venus in full daylight [Levi-Strauss]" with the naked eye. How can I possibly endeavor to preserve it?

How did we loose it? I don't know. But I do know where we can find it: in the eyes of a child.

Suddenly, Yesheng turns her head and walks away off to another discovery. I follow, eager for another lesson. Perhaps it is lost for my generation, but for my children and their children, and with each subsequent generation we can pull away a little more each time. We can fight to encourage what infants are instinctively born with and as they grow teach them the ways of the old. More importantly though, we must be ready to learn from them.

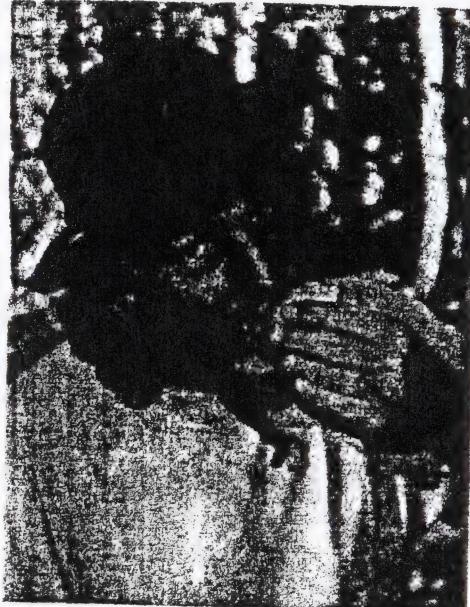


Ever since that day, I stop and remind myself that in order to breakthrough my civilized conditioning, I must watch her. It is this conditioning that prevents us from emulating the ability of the indigenous tribes of the Arctic who could gaze upwards and read the clouds as a map [Stefansson].

Perhaps then one day my granddaughter's granddaughter will sit among a grove of bamboo sprung forth out of a cracked and abandoned highway, singing along with the katydids and warblers, watching the sun glimmer on the back of a tiger beetle navigating a branch. As she claps and urges him on. Silently observing.

Holmberg, Allan 'Nomads of the Long Bow'  
Leidloff, Jean 'The Continuum Concept'  
Levi-Strauss, Claude 'Myth and Meaning'  
Stefansson, Vilhjalmur 'My Life with the Eskimos'

"A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood" -  
Rachel Carson



**Ashcakes** can be made by adding equal portions of cattail root flour, cattail pollen, or flour made from wild grains.

in the middle. To cook them, toss the patties on some medium hot coals. Cook both sides to your taste. You can turn them and take them out with quick, careful fingers, or if you are sitting just out of reach, you can flip them with a stick and spear them to pull them out.

Everybody loves to eat, and kids especially like cooking and eating around a camp fire. Indeed, probably one of the easiest ways to interest kids in primitive skills is through their stomachs! One easy skill to start with is the art and science of ashcakes.

Ashcakes are a simple bread made from a dough of flour and water that has been baked on hot coals. It is not a totally primitive skill, as the ashcakes are usually made with wheat flour, but other types of flour can be blended in with it. The wheat flour is helpful because it contains the sticky gluten to hold the whole thing together. A more wild ashcake can be made by adding equal portions of cattail root flour, cattail pollen, or flour made from wild grains. Ashcakes can be made without any wheat flour, but they tend to fall apart quite easily.

#### **Ashcake basics:**

The trick to making good ashcakes is to keep the dough dry. Dough that is wet will stick to your hands when you mix it, and to the coals when you cook it. I add water a little at a time and stir with the stick until the dough is wet enough to work by hand, but still dry enough not to stick to my fingers. Then I knead the dough thoroughly and shape it into patties. The patties can be tortilla-thin or quite thick.

Thin ones cook all the way through; thick ones stay doughy. You can turn them and take them out with quick, careful fingers, or if you are sitting just out of reach, you can flip them with a stick and spear them to pull them out.

**Ashcakes**  
*Text and Photos By Thomas J. Elpel*

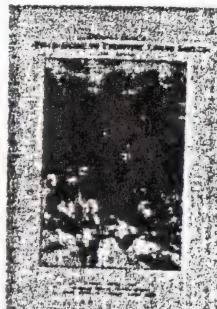




Brush the ashes off both sides and enjoy. Ashcakes are quite tasty hot off the fire. They make okay trail food the next day, but you must eat them soon; in a few days ashcakes dry into hard-tack. I first learned about ashcakes as a student on a twenty-six day expedition in 1984. I had two ashcakes left over at the end of that trip, which quickly hardened, so I put them on a shelf and kept them as momentos for the next ten years!

Ashcakes can be leavened with a little baking soda. Baking soda helps the dough to rise a little, and it helps the dough to cook more thoroughly. Alternately, you can use any commercial biscuit or pancake mix with high powered leavenings for some exotic ashcakes. One other way to leaven the dough is by culturing sour-dough yeast.

(more)



Thomas J. Elpel is the owner/director of Hollowtop Outdoor Primitive School (HOPS) in Pony, Montana. Tom's Field Guide to Primitive Living Skills is available for \$17 plus \$3 priority postage. Send Check or Money Order to HOPS - Box 691 - Pony, MT 59747, or use your Visa or Mastercard and call toll free 1-800-685-3202.



*White ash from the cooking fire  
leavens the cakes much like  
baking soda.*

need to do is leave the dough in a warm place for three or four days. You can store it in a plastic bag and open it to smell the progress each day. The dough must be warm to work, although it is fairly hardy. It will store fine in a backpack even on cold winter days, just so you sleep with it to keep it warm each night. When your dough is ready it will have a distinct sourdough aroma, and your previously firm, dry dough will now be sticky and more fluid. Pinch off enough for an ashcake and dust it with dry flour, then cook it. Be careful not to work the air out of the patty. Alternately, you can work the sourdough starter with fresh dough and shape these into individual patties and allow them to rise before cooking. You must use all your sourdough or use all except a pinch of starter to quicken your next batch. Wild sourdough without new material to feed on will quickly sour beyond most people's palatability.

#### **Ash Bagels:**

Another type of ashcake is the "ash bagel". To make an ash bagel first mix up some regular ashcake dough, with or without leavening. Then shape the dough like a bagel. Bring a pot of water to a rolling boil. Drop the ash bagel in the pot and boil it for five or ten minutes. Then remove it from the water and finish cooking it on the coals like an ashcake to brown the crust.

#### **Gourmet Ashcakes:**

Ashcakes that are already delicious can be transformed into gourmet ashcakes with the addition of just about any ingredients you happen to have. Butter on a hot ashcake is scrumptious, and butter and honey together is even more so.

For dinner try ashcakes as tortillas with refried beans. We even make these at home, by simply cooking the ashcakes right on top of our wood stove. To make a cheese melt, fold a flat ashcake over a piece of cheese, pinch the edges together and bake. To make a pig-in-a-blanket first cook your hot dog on a stick and then wrap it with ashcake dough and toss it in the coals to bake the dough.

For dessert, try a turn-over with raisins, cinnamon, and marshmallows, or wild berries and sugar, baked inside an ashcake. The possibilities are as limitless as your imagination.

Pies are also fun to make with wild berries. Just cook the berries first, with a little bit of sugar for sweetener, and a pinch of flour for thickener. Make a bowl with the ashcake dough, then pour in the cooked berry filling. Pat some dough out flat for a lid, and pinch that together with the walls of the pie shell. Make the pie small enough so you can carefully pick the whole thing up, and place it in the hot coals of the fire. Cover the whole pie with hot coals to cook the top and sides. In five or ten minutes the pie is cooked and ready to eat.

On one of our wild food harvest classes we had a number of kids along, so we prepared foods the kids would like. For one of our desserts we picked a large quantity of chokecherries. We mashed these up, pits and all, on a metate, as I was shown by an Indian lady, and cooked them to destroy the cyanide contained in the pits. We sweetened the chokecherry filling, then made cherry turn-overs. All of us savored the partially charred-black, gooey, sticky turn-overs, even while crunching away on the ground-up chokecherry pits! As one of the mothers remarked, "My daughter never would have touched this at home, but here she was involved in the process and delighted with the final product!"



*Wild pies, turnovers or empanadas are made by adding fruits and berries.*



"Kids are born with a bridge between world-time and dream-time and they wander back and forth over it at will, don't they? And you never know which end of the bridge they're standing on, do you? You just gotta be willing to stand with them at the dream-time end of that bridge instead of jerking them over into world-time and then burning the bridge behind them on the presumption that facts will save your butt. Have they? No, and they're not gonna. It takes a change of heart and that only happens at the dream-time end of the bridge." -Utah Phillips

## 'Growing Up as a Fore'

-E. Richard Sorenson

Untouched by the outside world, they had lived for thousands of years in isolated mountains and valleys deep in the interior of Papua New Guinea. They had no cloth, no metal, no money, no idea that their homeland was an island—or that what surrounded it was salt water. Yet the Fore (for'ay) people had developed remarkable and sophisticated approaches to human relations, and their child-rearing practices gave their young unusual freedom to explore. Successful as hunter-gatherers and as subsistence gardeners, they also had great adaptability, which brought rapid accommodation with the outside world after their lands were opened up.

It was alone that I first visited the Fore in 1963—a day's walk from a recently built airstrip. I stayed six months. Perplexed and fascinated, I returned six times in the next ten years, eventually spending a year and a half living with them in their hamlets.

Theirs was a way of life different from anything I had seen or heard about before. There were no chiefs, patriarchs, priests, medicine men or the like. A striking personal freedom was enjoyed even by the very young, who could move about at will and be where or with whom they liked. Infants rarely cried, and they played

confidently with knives, axes, and fire. Conflict between old and young did not arise; there was no "generation gap."



*Close, constant body contact, as between this baby and older girl, creates security in Fore children.*

Older children enjoyed deferring to the interests and desires of the younger, and sibling rivalry was virtually undetectable. A responsive sixth sense seemed to attune the Fore hamlet mates to each other's interests and needs. They did not have to directly ask, inveigle, bargain or speak out for what they needed or wanted. Subtle, even fleeting expressions of interest, desire, and discomfort were quickly read and helpfully acted on by one's associates. This spontaneous urge to share food, affection, work, trust, tools and pleasure was the social cement that held the Fore hamlets together. It was a pleasant way of life, for one could always be with those with whom one got along well.

Ranging and planting, sharing and living, the Fore diverged and expanded through high virgin lands in a pioneer region. They hunted out their gardens, tilled them while they lasted, then hunted again. Moving ever away from lands peopled and used they had a self-contained life with its own special ways.

The underlying ecological conditions were like those that must have encompassed the world before agriculture set its imprint so broadly. Abutting the Fore was virtually unlimited virgin land, and they had food plants they could introduce into it. Like hunter-gatherers they sought their sources of sustenance first in one locale and then another, across an extended range, following oppor-

tunities provided by a providential nature. But like agriculturalists they concentrated their effort and attention more narrowly on selected sites of production, on their gardens. They were both seekers and producers. A pioneer people in a pioneer land, they ranged freely into a vast territory, but they planted to live.

Cooperative groups formed hamlets and gardened together. When the fertility of a garden declined, they abandoned it. Grass sprung up to cover these abandoned sites of earlier cultivation, and, as the Fore moved on to other parts of the forest, they left uninhabited grasslands to mark their passage.

The traditional hamlets were small, with a rather fluid system of social relations. A single large men's house provided shelter for 10 to 20 men and boys and their visiting friends. The several smaller women's houses each normally sheltered two married women, their unmarried

daughters and their sons up to about six years of age. Formal kinship bonds were less important than friendship was. Fraternal "gangs" of youths formed the hamlets; their "clubhouses" were the men's houses.

During the day the gardens became the center of life. Hamlets were virtually deserted as friends, relatives and children went to one or more garden plots to mingle their social, economic and erotic pursuits in a pleasant and emotionally filled Gestalt of garden life. The boys and unmarried youths preferred to explore and hunt in the outlying lands, but they also passed through and tarried in the gardens.



*Learning to be a toddler, a Fore baby takes its first experimental steps. No one urges him on.*

Daily activities were not scheduled. No one made demands, and the land was bountiful. Not surprisingly the line between work and play was never clear. The transmission of the Fore behavioral pattern to the young began in early infancy during a period of unceasing human physical contact. The effect of being constantly "in touch" with hamlet mates and their daily life seemed to start a process which proceeded by degrees: close rapport, involvement in regular activity, ability to handle seemingly dangerous implements safely, and responsible freedom to pursue individual interests at will without danger.

While very young, infants remained in almost continuous bodily contact with their mother, her housemates or her gardening associates. At first, mothers' laps were the center of activity, and infants occupied themselves there by nursing, sleeping and playing with their own bodies or those of their caretakers. They were not put aside for the sake of other activities, as when food was being prepared or heavy loads were being carried. Remaining in close, uninterrupted physical contact with those around them, their basic needs such as rest, nourishment, stimulation and security were continuously satisfied without obstacle.

By being physically in touch from their earliest days, Fore youngsters learned to communicate needs, desires and feelings through a body language of touch and response that developed before speech. This opened the door to a much closer rapport with those around them than otherwise would have been possible, and led ultimately to the Fore brand

of social cement and the sixth sense that bound groups together through spontaneous, responsive sharing.

As the infant's awareness increased, his interests broadened to the things his mother and other caretakers did and to the objects and materials they used. Then these youngsters began crawling out to explore things that attracted their attention. By the time they were toddling, their interests continually took them on short sorties to nearby objects and persons. As soon as they could walk well, the excursions extended to the entire hamlet and its gardens, and then beyond with other children. Developing without interference or supervision, this personal exploratory learning quest freely touched on whatever was around, even axes, knives, machetes, fire, and the like. When I first went to the Fore, I wasaghast.

Eventually I discovered that this capability emerged naturally from Fore infant-handling practices in their milieu of close human physical proximity and tactile interaction. Because touch and bodily contact lend themselves naturally to satisfying the basic needs of young children, an early kind of communicative experience fostered cooperative interaction between infants and their caretakers, also kinesthetic contact with the activities at hand. This made it easy for them to learn the appropriate handling of the tools of life.

The early pattern of exploratory activity included frequent return to one of the "mothers." Serving as home base, the bastion of security, a woman might occasionally give the youngster a nod of encouragement, if

he glanced in her direction with uncertainty. Yet rarely did the women attempt to control or direct, nor did they participate in the child's quests or jaunts.

As a result Fore children did not have to adjust to rule and schedule in order to find their place in life. They could pursue their interests and whims wherever they might lead and

still be part of a richly responsive world of human touch which constantly provided sustenance, comfort, diversion and security.

Learning proceeded during the course of pursuing interests and exploring. Constantly "in touch" with people who were busy with daily activities, the Fore young quickly learned the skills of life from example. Muscle tone, movement and mood were components of this learning process; formal lessons and commands were not. Kinesthetic skills developed so quickly that infants were able to casually handle knives and similar objects before they could walk.

Even after several visits I continued to be surprised that the unsupervised Fore toddlers did not recklessly thrust themselves into unappreciated dangers, the way our own children tend to do. But then, why should they? From their earliest days, they enjoyed a benevolent sanctuary from which the world could be confidently viewed, tested and appreciated. This sanctuary remained ever available, but did not demand, restrain or impose. One could go and come at will.

In close harmony with their source of life, the Fore young were able confidently, not furtively, to extend their inquiry. They could widen their understanding as they chose. There was no need to play tricks or deceive in order to pursue life.

Emerging from this early childhood was a freely ranging young child rather in tune with his older and younger hamlet mates, disinclined to act out impulsively, and with a capable appreciation of the properties of potentially dangerous objects. Such children could be permitted to move out on their own, unsupervised and unrestricted. They were safe.

Such a pattern could persist indefinitely, re-creating itself in each new generation. However, hidden within the receptive character it produced was an Achilles heel; it also permitted adoption of new practices, including child-handling practices, which did *not* act to perpetuate the pattern. In only one generation after Western contact, the cycle of Fore life was broken.

Attuned as they were to individual pursuit of economic and social good, it did not take the Fore long to recognize the value of the new materials, practices and ideas that began to flow in. Indeed, change began almost immediately with efforts to obtain steel axes, salt, medicine and cloth. The Fore were quick to shed indigenous practices in favor of Western example. They rapidly altered their ways to adapt to Western law, government, religion, materials and trade.

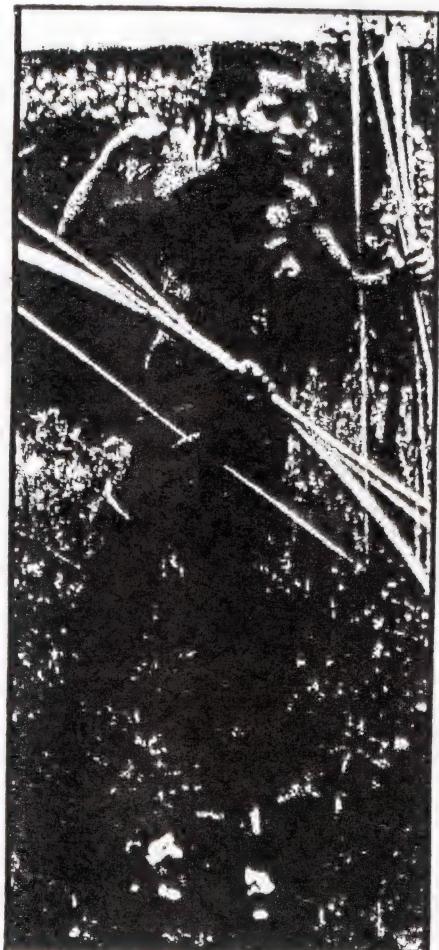
Sometimes change was so rapid that many people seemed to be afflicted by a kind of cultural shock. An anomie, even cultural amnesia, seemed to pervade some hamlets for a time. There were individuals who appeared temporarily to have lost memory of recent past events. Some Fore even forgot what type and style of traditional garments they had worn only a few years earlier, or that they had used stone axes and had eaten their dead close relatives.

Remarkably open-minded, the Fore so readily accepted reformulation of identity and practice that suggestion or example by the new government officers, missionaries and scientists could alter tribal affiliation, place names, conduct and hamlet

style. When the first Australian patrol officer began to map the region in 1957, an error in communication led him to refer to these people as the "Fore." Actually they had had no name for themselves and the word, Fore, was their name for a quite different group, the Awa, who spoke another language and lived in another valley. They did not correct the patrol officer but adopted his usage. They all now refer to themselves as the Fore. Regional and even personal names changed just as readily.

More than anything else, it was the completion of a steep, rough, always muddy Jeep road into the Fore lands that undermined the traditional life. Almost overnight their isolated region was opened. Hamlets began to move down from their ridgeline sites in order to be nearer the road, consolidating with others.

The power of the road is hard to overestimate. It was a great artery where only restricted capillaries had existed before. And down this artery came a flood of new goods, new ideas and new people. This new road, often impassable even with four-wheel-drive vehicles, was perhaps the single most dramatic stroke wrought by the government. It was to the Fore an opening to a new world. As they began to use the road, they started to shed traditions evolved in the protec-



*On the way to hunt birds, cuscus (a marsupial) or rats, Fore boys stride through a sweet-potato garden.*

tive insularity of their mountain fastness, to adopt in their stead an emerging market culture.

"Walkabout," nonexistent as an institution before contact, quickly became an accepted way of life. Fore boys began to roam hundreds of miles from their homeland in the quest for new experience, trade goods, jobs and money. Like the classic practice

of the Australian aborigine, this "walkabout" took one away from his home for periods of varying length. But unlike the Australian practice, it usually took the boys to jobs and schools rather than to a solitary life in traditional lands. Obviously it sprang from the earlier pattern of individual freedom to pursue personal interests and opportunity wherever it might lead. It was a new expression of the old Fore exploratory pattern.

Some boys did not roam far, whereas others found ways to go to distant cities. The roaming boys often sought places where they might be welcomed as visitors, workers or students for a while. Mission stations and schools, plantation work camps, and the servants' quarters of the European population became way-stations in the lives of the modernizing Fore boys.

Some took jobs on coffee plantations. Impressed by the care and attention lavished on coffee by European planters and by the money they saw paid to coffee growers, these young Fore workers returned home with coffee beans to plant.

Coffee grew well on the Fore hillsides, and in the mid-1960s, when the first sizable crop matured, Fore who previously had felt lucky to earn a few dollars found themselves able to earn

a few hundred dollars. A rush to coffee ensued, and when the new gardens became productive a few years later, the Fore income from coffee jumped to a quarter of a million dollars a year. The coffee revolution was established.

At first the coffee was carried on the backs of its growers (sometimes for several days) over steep, rough mountain trails to a place where it could be sold to a buyer with a jeep.

However, as more and more coffee was produced, the villagers began to turn with efforts to planning and constructing roads in association with neighboring villages. The newly built roads, in turn, stimulated further economic development and the opening of new trade stores throughout the region.

Following European example, the segregated collective men's and women's houses were abandoned. Family houses were adopted. This changed the social and territorial arena for all the young children, who hitherto had been accustomed to living equally with many members of their hamlet. It gave them a narrower place to belong, and it made them more distinctly someone's children. Uncomfortable in the family houses, boys who had grown up in a freer territory began to gather in "boys' houses," away from the adult men who were now beginning to live in family houses with their wives. Mothers began to wear blouses, altering the early freer access to the breast.

Episodes of infant and child frustration, not seen in traditional Fore hamlets, began to take place along with repeated incidents of anger, withdrawal, aggressiveness and stinginess.

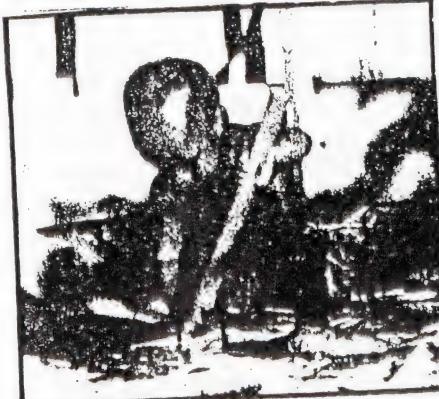
So Western technology worked its magic on the Fore, its powerful materials and practices quickly shattering their isolated autonomy and lifestyle. It took only a few years from the time Western intruders built their

first grass-thatched patrol station before the Fore way of life they found was gone.

Fortunately, enough of the Fore traditional ways were systematically documented on film to reveal how unique a flower of human creation they were. Like nothing else, film made it possible to see the behavioral patterns of this way of life. The visual record, once made, captured data which was unnoticed and unanticipated at the time of filming and which was simply impossible to study without such records. Difficult-to-spot subtle patterns and fleeting nuances of manner, mood and human relations emerged by use of repeated reexamination of related incidents, sometimes by slow motion and stopped frame. Eventually the characteristic behavioral patterns of Fore life became clear, and an important aspect of human adaptive creation was revealed.

The Fore way of life was only one of the many natural experiments in living that have come into being through thousands of years of independent development in the world. The Fore way is now gone; those which remain are threatened. Under the impact of modern technology and commerce, the entire world is now rapidly becoming one system. By the year 2000 all the independent natural experiments that have come into being during the world's history will be merging into a single world system.

One of the great tragedies of our modern time may be that most of these independent experiments in living are disappearing before we can discover the implication of their special expressions of human possibility. Ironically, the same technology responsible for the worldwide cultural convergence has also provided the means by which we may capture detailed visual records of the yet remaining independent cultures. The question is whether we will be able to seize this never-to-be repeated opportunity. Soon it will be too late. Yet, obviously, increasing our understanding of the behavioral repertoire of humankind would strengthen our ability to improve life in the world.



*In infancy, Fore children begin experimental play with knives and other lethal objects. Sorenson never saw a child warned away or injured by them.*

# Permaculture Education for Children

Robyn McCurdy

The basis for how we see and respond to the world is formed in early childhood, if not before. Permaculture requires of us to be able to observe and experience inter-relationships, then to use this knowledge in designing integrated systems which foster a sustainable way of life. If permaculture education began in childhood, a consequence could be more balanced responsible adults to care for our planet.

In contemporary society education is formalised rather than an integral part of daily tribal life. Thus it is necessary to set up "lessons" within the structure of a "school" so as to make permaculture education available to all children. Although the permaculture perspective contrasts with the segmented presentation of reality as taught in most schools, there is a chance it can be widely introduced if a children's permaculture curriculum is presented in a "professional way" -- along the lines of the typical curriculum formats.

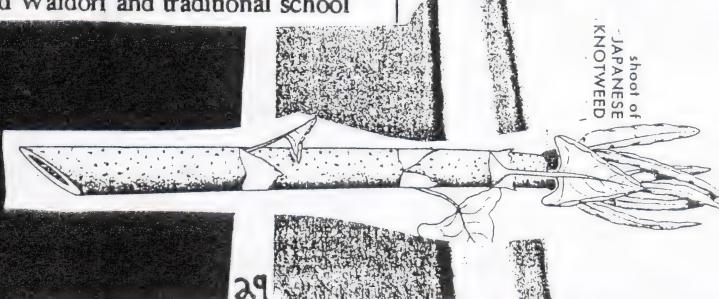
To be of lasting value for the child, such a curriculum needs to be taught as a "progressive spiral" throughout their school years, not briefly as a "unit" in grade 3. For instance, the theme of "Patterns in Nature" would be built into every grade.

For the last several years I have been designing a children's school and children's permaculture curriculum and teaching children in New Zealand (Aotearoa). As a certified Waldorf and traditional school

teacher, I believe a well designed and tested permaculture curriculum would be of great value preparing children (and adults) for an abundant future. Other teaching friends have done similar work within various sections of the Aotearoan school system. Between us, we have been working up strategies for officially introducing permaculture into our state schools as part of the new subject called "Agriculture Across the Curriculum". These strategies may be equally relevant in U.S. schools (K through college).

After nine months visiting with U.S. teachers, reviewing the scant books and pamphlets on children and agriculture and gathering up the several curricula available, it does seem to me that there is a promising and unfilled niche here. There is a strong receptivity in the U.S. in many schools (e.g. Waldorf, Montessori, home schooling and public schools) to a children and nature/gardening/agriculture approach. School systems in many states already have school gardens and involve parents in the work. Perhaps we can move this budding interest along by some concerted action.

I have begun a list of books, articles and magazines together with brief reviews germane to a children's "greenculture". I would appreciate hearing from you about the books you have found valuable, even illuminating. Of course review copies would be most valuable.





Zoe (and Aodhaoir). Photo: Guy Baldwin

Robyn McCurdy with children at home at the Tui Community, South Island, New Zealand

My intention is to: 1) assess what resources are available and identify the gaps; 2) approach permaculture design course graduates with a sensitivity for children and education who have expertise in specific fields of our curriculum which are marginally or poorly covered ...and ask them to write resource material (if this happens to be you, please do contact me!); 3) circulate this developing curricula to a cadre of teachers willing to use it with their classes and give feedback before eventual publication, and; 4) present the revised curriculum in a low cost booklet and chart format which will form part of a series of educational children's permaculture books.

*Editor's note: When completed, the children's permaculture curriculum and resource lists will be offered initially through The Permaculture Activist.*

March, 1987

As with vegetables, giving the time to sow is best; either bro-  
ve inches apart  
do not need

### Some good books

## Native American Gardening: Stories, Projects and Recipes for Families

Michael J. Caduto & Joseph Bruchac

Sunflower Houses & Roots, Shoots, Buckets & Boots - Sharon Lovejoy

A Childrens Food Forest - Carolyn Nuttall

Victory Garden Kids' Book - Marjorie Waters

Muck & Magic - Jo Readman

Children's Gardening - Peter Please

Kid's Gardening - Kevin Raftery

Seedfolks - Paul Fleischman

ng plants, occasionally that, the plants will or the branches of a tree all over them. They like the ground so that it is grow Japanese radish potatoes and taro are ed they will come up and never be overgrown, potatoes can be grown in the ground when cultivate and soften ns, potatoes can be grown have found white clover. It grows thickly among weeds such as mug it is sown mixed with a living mulch,emic round moist

take care of the weeds, but Lay out bamboo. Just leave a it. If the soil is not even the plants. Once me place every few days. Just leave a few cucumbers will up the fruit just berries also works



# PORCUPINES



A prickly porcupine can stab an enemy with its 30,000 quills. It doesn't need to run away fast. It waddles like a duck, and its tail drags on the ground. The quills make brush marks in the dust or snow.

When snow is deep, a porcupine just plows through, making a wavy ditch.

Porcupines climb trees to get tender twigs, buds, or acorns. They drop acorn shells and bitten-off branches under the tree. Some trees have huge bare spots where porcupines have pulled off the bark and eaten it.



Porcupine scats  
are shaped like  
peanuts or cashew nuts.  
They may be connected like  
a necklace



from 'Tracks, Scats, and Signs' Linda Garrow

## EDIBLE PLANTS

One of the greatest considerations in determining whether to instruct children about edible plants is to ascertain if the children are mature enough to identify edible plants. Ask yourself this question: "Would I stake my life on my ability to identify a plant species? Would I stake my children's lives?" Essentially when you teach children about wild edible plants, that is exactly what you are doing—staking your children's lives on their ability to identify those plants. Between the identification, collection, and preparation of plants, and so many poisonous look-alikes the task can become almost overwhelming at times. Above all other skills we teach children, this is the most time-consuming, and the most dangerous. I strongly urge you to take your time and make very sure your children know exactly what they are doing. Make sure you know what you are doing.

The best way to start with wild edible plants is to make it a family project. Wild edible plants are not learned overnight, but slowly, over a period of weeks, months, and sometimes years. I suggest you first build up your plant library, stocking it with books on plant identification guides. The Peterson Field Guide Series is one of the best overall field guide collections on the market. A *Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants of Eastern and Central North America* by Lee Peterson is an excellent guide to begin with. The book is well written and considers poisonous look-alikes. *Tom Brown's Field Guide to Wild Edible and Medicinal Plants* is written for the more advanced student, though it does give some good recipes, and background information.

Each time you take your children into the wild places make it a habit to identify plants—any plants, edible or not. This way your children begin to see the subtle differences in plant species, and to understand where certain plants grow, the various parts of the plants, and what they look like in different seasons. You will find that your children will enjoy identifying the various wildflowers at first, but then as their skill matures, all plants will become interesting. It is not enough to just have your children identify a plant, but have them spend some time observing it, where it is grown, how it changes with topography, and what it looks like when it is young or old. It sometimes helps to have your children try to draw the plant from memory, as this tends to set the image of the plant in the children's minds.

As the children improve at identifying plants, it is time to start teaching the wild edible varieties. Take one plant at a time, positively identify it, compare it to any look-alikes, harvest it, then take it home and prepare it along with your regular meal. The children must go through the whole process from start to finish, identifying, collecting, preparing, and eating. This way the children become familiar with the plant and its

taste. Just eating a plant once is not enough; eat it every few weeks as a review. Augment the meals with teas made from various edible plants, and begin to season the family's regular menu with various wild herbal seasonings. Start off with easy plants that taste good to the children; ones that do not have poisonous look-alikes or need any complicated cooking methods.

**Note:** If you do not trust your ability to identify plants, then by all means, take one of the many courses offered through the National, State, or Local Parks Service. Many communities also have groups that meet to study all sorts of wildlife. Get involved with the group and learn all you can. You are dealing, ultimately, with your family's health and life.

In the scope of this book I will be covering just four species of wild, edible plants. (This plant section is not a field identification manual. For proper identification refer to any good plant identification guide.) Fortunately several representatives of any one of these species can be found throughout North America. These plants are relatively safe and easy for children to learn to recognize, with very few poisonous look-alikes or complicated cooking instructions. From these four your children can branch out and learn about more of the plants in their area. In most cases, however, these plants are usually enough to sustain children through most survival situations in most topographies. These plants I have come to know as the "Big Four."

**Note:** There is no way to predict whether children might have an allergic reaction to a wild edible plant or not until the children eat that plant. I recommend that the first time children eat any edible wild plant they only ingest a little. That way if there is a reaction, their system will not be saturated with the plant. Next time the children eat the plant, have them eat just a little more, then repeat the process again and again over a period of days, allowing at least thirty-six hours between eatings.

5 PETALS; MOSTLY 3 LEAFLETS

#### WILD STRAWBERRIES

*Fragaria* spp.

Fruit, leaves

Low plants similar to cultivated strawberries, but with smaller fruit. Leaves long-stalked, with 3 coarsely-toothed leaflets. Flowers round-petaled, in flat clusters on a separate stalk from leaves. Colonial. 2 species shown.

 Use: Fresh or cooked fruit, jam, tea. Although the fruit is smaller, wild strawberries are much tastier than domestic varieties. Use like cultivated strawberries; pectin needed when making jam. The dried leaves make a pleasant tea. An extract of the fresh leaves is rich in vitamin C. SUMMER

**WOOD STRAWBERRY**, *F. vesca*. Not as common as the following species. Flowers and fruit smaller, on stalks that usually rise above the leaves. Fruit more conical; seeds on surface. 3-6 in. (7.5-15 cm). Where found: Moist, rocky woods; openings. Canada, n. U.S. south to Mo., Va. Flowers: May-Aug.

**COMMON STRAWBERRY**, *F. virginiana*. Color pl. 10. Hairy. Stalks with flowers and fruit do not rise above leaves. Fruit ovoid; seeds embedded in pits. 3-6 in. (7.5-15 cm). Where found: Fields, open places. Most of our area. Flowers: April-June.

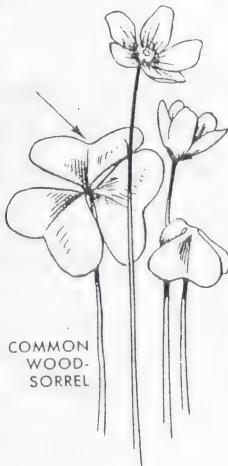
 **BRAMBLES** Young shoots (blackberries); leaves, fruit *Rubus* spp. Color pl. 11 (Common Blackberry)

Raspberries, dewberries, and blackberries form a complex group of prickly or bristly shrubs with 3-5 leaflets. See p. 184.

**Use:** Fruit, jelly, cold drink, tea, salad.

**SPRING** (blackberry shoots); **SUMMER** (leaves, fruit)

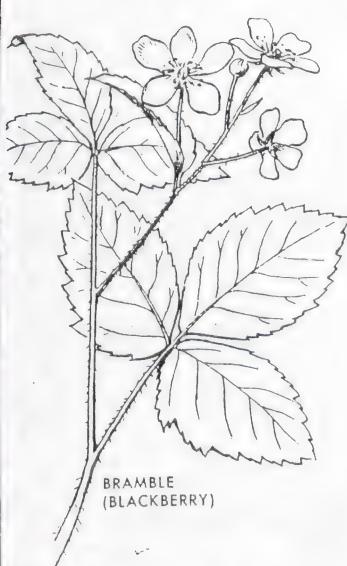
## WHITE



WOOD STRAWBERRY



red



COMMON STRAWBERRY



red

$\times \frac{2}{3}$

Leaves



### COMMON WOOD-SORREL

*Oxalis montana* Color pl. 15

A low, delicate, woodland flower. Leaves *cloverlike* with 3 inversely heart-shaped leaflets that often fold along a central crease. Note sour taste. Petals white or pale pink with prominent pink veins. Colonial. 3-4 in. (7.5-10 cm). See also Yellow Wood-sorrel, p. 72, and Violet Wood-sorrel, p. 104.

**Where found:** Cool, moist, deciduous or evergreen woods. Canada, n. U.S.; in mts. to Tenn., N.C. **Flowers:** May-July.

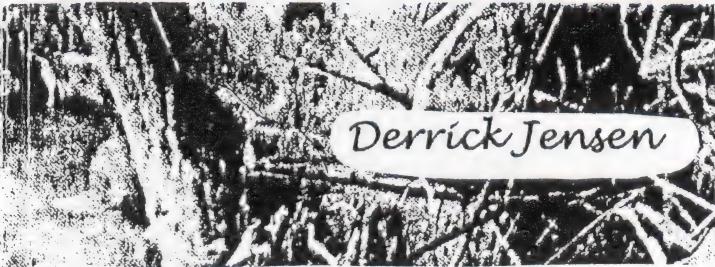
**Use:** Salad, cold drink. The fresh leaves are an excellent sour addition to salads. To make a refreshing drink, steep the leaves for 10 min. in hot water, chill, and sweeten. Rich in vitamin C.

**Warning:** Excessive consumption over an extended period of time may inhibit the absorption of calcium by the body.

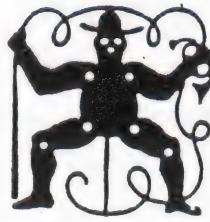
SPRING-SUMMER

*wisdom of the elders*





Derrick Jensen



last fall i had the honor of going to hear derrick give a talk just down the road from my house. his writing is some of the most inspirational out there, and i was especially excited because the children would have a chance to see him. i have always felt it is my duty to introduce the kids to their radical elders. the evening was overwhelming. he speaks as passionately as he writes and i was able to witness him effortlessly defend his argument against attacks from all sides. i had dozens of questions i wanted to ask him, so when he began Q&A with the audience i naturally froze up and sat there silently. my partner, knowing my tendency to be reserved, urged me to stick around and talk to him afterward. in order to overcome my shyness she suggested that i choose just one question to ask. it would therefore need to be what i personally felt was *the* most important question. after introducing myself and thanking him for his work i managed to mumble, "What advice do you have for parents?"

he fixed his stare on me, waiting till he had my complete attention, then said simply...

### **Teach them to say "No!"**

my head dropped and my eyes anxiously scanned the desk as i tried to absorb every detail of the moment. derrick sat there patiently. after a few seconds (it felt like a few hours) i looked back up at him. he continued...

### **And teach them to say "Yes!"**

Dolma's children refer to both Angchuk and Angdus as "abba," or "father," but any man old enough to be your father can be addressed in this way. Dolma says she knows who the father of each child is. The eldest child belongs to Angchuk, she says, the youngest one to Angdus. "How do you know?" "I just know." Neither Angdus nor Angchuk is concerned about which child is his own: the children are cared for equally.

Spending time with Dolma's family, I saw something of how children are brought up. They have continual physical contact with others, a factor that plays an important role in their development. Dolma spent more time with little Angchuk, who was six months old, than anyone else did. All night he would sleep in her arms, able to feed whenever he wanted. In the daytime she would usually take him with her if she was working in the fields. But caring for the baby was not her job alone. Everyone looked after him. Someone was always there to kiss and cuddle him. Men and women alike adore little children, and even the teenage boys from next door were not embarrassed to be seen cooing over little Angchuk or rocking him to sleep with a lullaby:

The traditional way of life allows mothers and children to remain together at all times. When villagers gather to discuss important issues, or at festivals and parties, children of all ages are always present. Even at social gatherings that run late into the night with drinking, singing, dancing, and loud music, young children can be seen running around, joining in the festivities until they simply drop off to sleep. No one tells them, "It's eight-thirty. You must be off to bed."

I told Dolma how much time some babies in the West spend away from their mothers and how at night they might sleep in another room and be fed cow's milk from plastic bottles on a schedule rather than when they cry. She was horrified: "Please, *atche* Helena, when you have children, whatever you do, don't treat your baby like that. If you want a happy baby, do like we do."

Deskit, from Tongde, bathing her  
little boy. After drying him, she rubs  
melted butter all over his body, to  
protect him against the dryness and  
cold.

from 'Ancient Futures'  
by Helena Norberg-Hodge



Alo - lo - lo  
Alo - lo - lo  
Please give a happy sleep to our little one!  
Alo - lo - lo . . .

Could the childhood traits of ADD have originated along with sedentary agriculture? Many studies point towards such a possibility. Thom Hartmann has written a number of books on this theory, and while I disagree with some of what he writes (the "you-too-can-be-successful-in-business-with-ADD" stuff) I believe he raises some intriguing points. Children with this gift have a different way of seeing the world .... a way in which we could learn plenty

### SUCCESSFUL HUNTERS

Be it pursuing buffalo in North America, hunting deer in Europe, chasing wildebeest in Africa, or picking fish from a stream in Asia, these hunters needed a certain set of physical and mental characteristics to be successful:

❖ They constantly monitor their environment. That rustle in the bushes could be a lion or a coiled snake. Failure to be fully aware of the environment and notice the faint sound might mean a swift and painful death. Or, that sound or flash of movement might be the animal the hunter was stalking, and noticing it could mean the difference between a full belly and hunger.

I've walked through forests and jungles with modern Hunter-types, in the United States, Europe, and East Africa, and one characteristic always struck me: they notice everything. A flipped-over stone, a tiny footprint, a distant sound, an odd smell in the air, the direction in which flowers point or moss grows. All these things have meaning to Hunters and, even when walking quickly, they notice everything.

❖ They can totally throw themselves into the hunt; time is elastic. Another characteristic of a good Hunter is the ability to totally focus on the moment, utterly abandoning all consideration of any other time or place. When the Hunter sees the prey he gives chase through gully or ravine, over fields or through trees, giving no thought to the events of the day before, not considering the future, simply living totally in that one

pure moment and immersing himself in it. When involved in the hunt, time seems to speed; when not in the hunt, time becomes slow. While a Hunter's ability to concentrate in general may be low, his ability to utterly throw himself into the hunt *at the moment* is astonishing.

❖ They're flexible, capable of changing strategy on a moment's notice. If the wild boar vanishes into the brush, and a rabbit appears, the Hunter is off in a new direction. Orderliness is not particularly important to a Hunter, but the abilities to make a quick decision and then act on it are vital.

❖ They can throw an incredible burst of energy into the hunt, so much so that they often injure themselves or exceed "normal" capabilities, without realizing it until later. Not unlike that quintessential of all Hunters, the lion, they have incredible bursts of energy—but not necessarily a lot of staying power. Given the choice of describing themselves as the tortoise or the hare in Aesop's famous fable, a Hunter would always say that he or she is the hare.

❖ They think visually. Hunters often describe their actions in terms of pictures, rather than words or feelings. They create outlines in their heads of where they've been and where they're going (Aristotle taught a memory method like this, with which a person would visualize rooms in a house, then objects in the rooms. When he gave a speech, he'd simply move from room to room in his memory, noticing the objects therein, which were reminders of the next thing he had to talk about.) Hunters often aren't much interested in abstractions, or else want to convert them to a visual form as quickly as possible. They tend to be lousy chess

### from ADD: A Different Perception

- Thom Hartmann

players, disdaining strategy because they prefer to go straight for the jugular.

❖ They love the hunt, but are easily bored by mundane tasks such as having to clean the fish, dress the meat, or fill out the paperwork. Donald Haughey, a former senior executive with Holiday Inns, tells the story of how Kemmons Wilson, the legendary founder of Holiday Inns, had a group of executives he called Bear Skinners. Wilson would go out into the world and shoot the bear (negotiate a new hotel site, bring in new financing, open a new division, etc.), and his Bear Skinners would take care of the details of "skinning and cleaning" the deal.

❖ They'll face danger that "normal" individuals would avoid. A wounded boar, or elephant, or bear, can kill you—and many a Hunter has been killed by his would-be prey. If you extend this analogy to warfare, where the Hunters are often the front line infantry or the most aggressive officers, the same is true. Hunters take risks. Extending this metaphor, Patton was a Hunter, Marshall a Farmer.

❖ They're hard on themselves and those around them. When your life depends on split-second decisions, your frustration and impatience threshold necessarily tend to be low. A fellow Hunter who doesn't get out of the way of a shot, or a soldier who defies orders and smokes on a dark night showing the enemy your position, cannot be tolerated.

# Earth Windows

wind. Through holes in its leafy ceiling, silent clouds peek into the children's woodsy room. Animals may come very close because the children are quiet and hidden.

Have everyone lie down and begin thinking of himself as part of the earth, looking skyward. Cover each child's body with leaves, sticks and pine needles — clear up to the sides of his head. Leave only the face exposed, and use enough leaves and sticks to give him a feeling of being down inside the earth. Now place leaves (pine needles work best) over the children's faces, patchwork-fashion. Make sure the leaves are free of dirt, and tell the children to close their eyes as you arrange this final bit of covering.

Tell the children you'll give a signal when it's time to come back; this will help them stay under the leaves longer without getting restless. You should give the signal before they become restless. Surprisingly, I've found that twenty minutes is usually not too long.

In a large group, work quickly and have the children help bury each other. Work in one direction, away from those covered first. Then when the first-covered emerge,

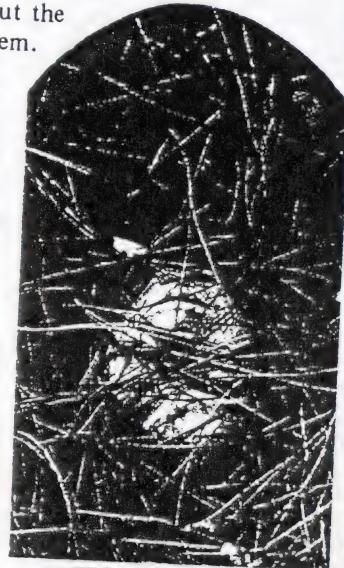
THE FOREST looks fresh and interesting, when you see it from a brand-new angle. In this game, the children lie still on the forest floor, absorbed in watching and listening to swaying trees, fluttering birds, and the rushing

you can steer them away from the others who are still enjoying the forest quiet. Any individuals or pairs who are likely to talk and disturb those around them can be buried some distance away from the others.

Children will be much more agreeable to the idea of being covered with soil and leaves if they've been digging or crawling on the forest floor just before the game begins. It's important also to say something in advance about the bugs that may crawl over them.

Play this down! You may want to let the children first handle various bugs, allowing the bugs to crawl over them. This is often a lot of fun — the children lose their early-learned prejudices against insects, and begin to appreciate these fascinating little creatures. Encourage them to stay calm while lying under the leaves and being crawled upon; ask them just to feel what the bug is doing, so that they can tell the others about it afterwards.

Earth Windows gives an experience of the forest through the forest's own eyes.



from 'Sharing Nature with Children' by Joseph Cornell

THIS GAME is for groups of at least two. Pair off. Blindfold your partner and lead him through the forest to any tree that attracts you. (How far will depend on your partner's age and ability to orientate himself. For all but very young children, a distance of 20-30 yards usually isn't too far.)

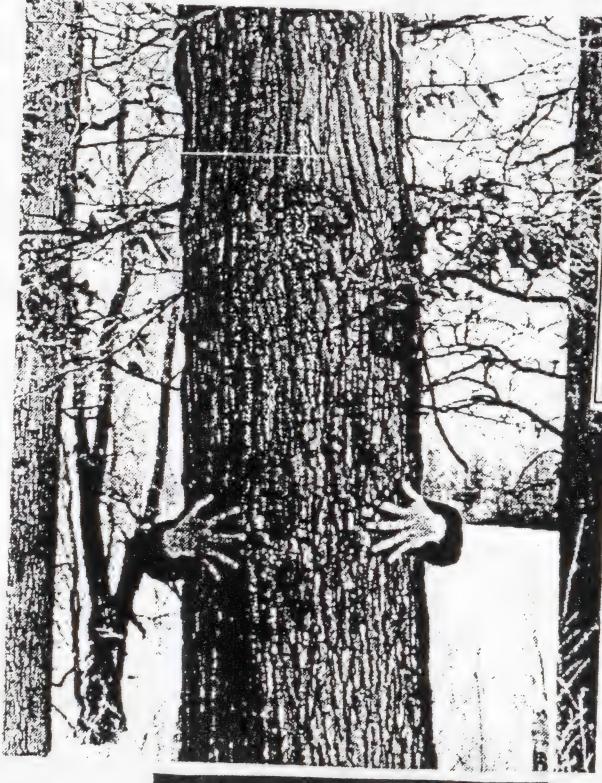
Help the "blind" child to explore his tree and to feel its uniqueness. I find that specific suggestions are best. For example, if you tell children to "*Feel the tree,*" they won't respond with as much interest as if you say "*Rub your cheek on the bark.*" Instead of "*Explore your tree,*" be specific: "*Is this tree still alive? . . . Can you put your arms around it? . . . Is the tree older than you are? . . . Can you find plants growing on it? . . . Animal signs? . . . Lichens? . . . Insects?*"

When your partner is finished exploring, lead him back to where you began, but take an indirect route. (This part of the game has its fun side, with the guides leading their partners over imaginary logs and through thickets that might easily have been avoided.) Now, remove the blindfold and let the child try to find the tree with his eyes open. Suddenly, as the child searches for his tree, what was a forest becomes a collection of very individual trees.

A tree can be an unforgettable experience in the child's life. Many times children have come back to me a year after we played Meet a Tree, and have literally dragged me out to the forest to *see "it."*



# Meet a Tree



# reviews

*note: since we can't include excerpts or pictures from every book, we've decided to include loose age groupings to help parents if they decide to locate a book listed. and on account of their being so much overlap, we'll just say Y for young'un, M for middle'un's, and O for older'un's and leave it at that.*

## books

**Outdoor Survival Handbook for Kids by Willy Whitefeather**  
- Wow! One of the few outdoor guides I've seen written specifically for youngsters. I had to pick this up and I'm glad I did. This guidebook is geared more toward older kids, but is silly enough to be enjoyed by all. Basically everything is covered here: Shelter (snow cave/lean-to's/wind pits), Food (finding water in the desert/how to determine if a plant is edible) Animals (observation/which are poisonous/dealing with mosquitos) Fire (collecting tinder/starting with and without a bow) [see pg.45], General (first aid, telling time, safety), as well as a little history on the Cherokees! Although there are a few puzzling moments ("save your plastic bags from the grocery") overall it's a great resource to help kids to learn survival skills. [O]

**Salamander Room by Anne Mazer** - Wonderful story (recommended by Derrick Jensen) of a child who brings a salamander to live inside his house, but realizes his room doesn't have what the salamander needs to survive. So the child then sets out to "re-wild" his room, bringing in bits of grass here, pieces of wood there, water and insects and so forth, until all that remains is a lone bed in the middle of a wild jungle. My son's personal favorite! [Y]

**Fiddleheads and Mustard Blossoms by Catherine Derezitsky** - In this remarkable book furry little creatures introduce children to edible plants, foraging, and preparation. Focusing on plants of the forest and meadows of northeastern Turtle Island, the book is divided into sections (greens, berries, mushrooms, etc) covering around forty plants altogether. Delightful illustrations with hand-written text (see pg.18) make this hard-to-find book definitely worth tracking down. [M]

**Animal Dreaming by Paul Morin** - while camped alongside ancient rock paintings a young child is told a Dreamtime story by an Aboriginal elder. While other animals are involved in a massive fight, the kangaroo, turtle, and emu calmly

"dream" the bioregion where the child is and the animals place in it. Amazing illustrations with vivid colors exploding off the page.

[Y]

### Tracks, Scats, and Signs (Fun with Nature Take-Along Guides) by Linda Garrow

Another topic you don't come across too often in children's book: scats and tracks.

Although this book is short (a little over 30 pages) it contains tracking information on 17 animals, divided into three sections: forest, field, and pond. Each page consists of a brief summary of the animal's behavior, scat, and track. Also included are a few activities to encourage the reader to learn more about their habitat. My only complaint is that the

information is much too short and sometimes only partial descriptions are given leaving the book feeling somewhat incomplete. A nice way to inspire (very) young readers to get out and start tracking. [Y]

S  
t fli

**Forest Child** by Marni McGee - When a little boy becomes lost in the forest the animals refuse to help him because he's a human. He panics in the dark, unfamiliar wilderness and runs away until he comes across a rabbit caught in a trap. After letting it out, all the animals of the forest appear to give thanks to the boy. Eagle gives

him guidance, bears show him honey and berries, rabbit makes a bed of moss, wolf watches over him, etc. Though when we bought this we were vegetarians, I have discovered the story now provides an excellent opportunity to explain to my son good vs. bad trapping/hunting [Y]

### A Journey to New York: From the Heart of the Himalayas by Helena Norberg-Hodge

- Comic book style that addresses the rare issue of westernization and cultural preservation.

When a tourist trekking the Himalayas offers Rigzin a job in New York, he jumps at the opportunity. Rigzin is initially impressed with the city until he misses his bus stop and ends up in a lower-class neighborhood where he witnesses poverty, despair, drug dealing, and theft firsthand. He begins to question the concept of "progress" and when he discovers that he is working for a pesticide company he returns home to educate the people of Ladakh on the truths of industrialization and modernization. Available from the Int'l Society for Ecology and Culture [www.isec.org.uk](http://www.isec.org.uk) [M] (for an excerpt of Norberg-Hodge's outstanding book 'Ancient Futures' see pg.31)

located, the walk might take a few hours or many days. Often, an entire village will walk together. This kind of journey takes twice as long

**Quest for the Faradawn by Richard Ford** - Considered somewhat of a forgotten classic, it is now beginning to gain more attention. Located in the Silver Wood, all of the animals co-exist peacefully with only the destruction of man to fear. The elders speak of a prophecy whereby a child will appear to save the remaining wild places. When an infant is abandoned in the forest he is raised by a badger and later sets out to fulfill the prophecy with the help of all his animal friends and his only humyn ally, Beth. Commonly compared favorably to the work of Tolkien, Ford's fantasy holds its own and is a fascinating saga of man's role in nature (sustainable balance vs. industrial destruction). The intriguing "Author's Note" at the end is worth the price alone. [O]

### video

**Four Families - Margaret Mead.** b&w, 1960. Margaret sits down and walks us through a typical evening with a family in India, France, Japan, and Canada. To help compare and contrast, the families all (loosely) share the same common elements: agrarian families, working-class, with one infant and two or more older siblings. The film focuses on the children's position and roles in their respective cultures, as well as the mother's responsibility to them. Each segment consist of customs, bathing, ritual, playtime, eating, chores, and

continues up until bedtime. The footage I found most fascinating was the different interactions between the older siblings and the baby; sometimes envious, sometimes passive, sometimes loving. (An interesting side-note I learned: In Japan on Winter Solstice, lemons are added to the bath water to symbolize the Sun). 60 min.

**N!ai: The Story of a !Kung Woman - John Marshall.** color, 1980. In this moving documentary N!ai reflects on all of the changes that have occurred during the 30 years since she was last interviewed by the film-makers. The first half of the film, shot in the 1950's, follows the young N!ai along with her tribe the Ju/wasi !Kung who were then still practicing foraging and hunting, relatively untouched by the outside world. This is contrasted with the more recent footage detailing the encroachment of western civilization (via missionaries, militarization, etc.) and the devastating consequences that inevitably follow. The first time I ever watched this my eyes swelled with tears of rage and mourning.

**Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh - International Society for Ecology and Culture.** Nestled high up among the western Himalayas, the people of Ladakh have managed to preserve a sustainable culture for thousands of generations

despite extremely limited resources and a harsh, barren climate. But traditional values of conservation, cooperation, and compassion were replaced with consumerism, competition, and intolerance as the juggernaut of "development" emerged forcing modernity and standardization upon their land and community. 60 min.

### zines

(one night a good friend of mine said "Here-go" and dropped a large bag in my lap. inside was dozens of parenting zines from years of collecting. so i decided to just reach in and pull out a couple at random and review those for each issue)

**Viva La Mama 'The Radical Parenting Zine'** - issue one, spring 2003. Coming out of Seattle, this zine is laden with a little of everything. 'Diary of a Revolutionary Milkmaid' chronicles her morning routine ("8:00: Make toast and Juice for Toddler. Let the cat out"). Although many can relate to the juggling of responsibilities, I find nothing "revolutionary" about letting the baby "watch the Beatles Yellow Submarine video in hopes of getting another half-hour sleep." Disturbing. 'Placenta Projects' is a step above, recounting the burial of her placenta in a flowerbed as well as some placenta art ideas and a bit of information on eating the placenta and it's nutritional benefits. 'Yo Mama's Maternal Feminist Agenda' is a seven

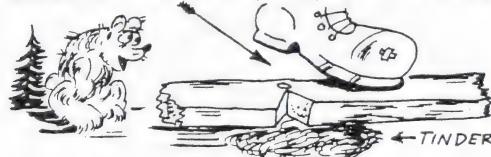
point platform by Ariel Gore which I skipped after reading "*We have a good system with bad managers. Vote. Run for office.*" She clearly is not familiar with the system by which we collectively co-existed for millenniums. There's a list of 'Radical Learning Resources' which contains some great titles on homeschooling, unschooling, and deschooling. Many of which will be featured in our upcoming 'Primal Unschooling' issue. 'Traditional Midwives & Massage' provides a thumbnail history of midwife traditions from around the global. Also, a personal account of hearing Ina May Gaskin speak. This was perhaps my favorite part. Ina May kicks ass and is not afraid to stand-up to the patriarchal doctor bureaucracy in defence of womyn midwives. Couple pages on Guerilla Gardening that are of interest. Add in a few pieces on health care, vegan recipes, Rachel Corrie, birth stories, reviews and events and you've got a pretty decent zine. Geared more toward the "hip mama" crowd and, not counting the piece on Guerilla Gardening, devoid of any ecological context which is more vital to our children's future than electronic music and yoga.

**Zuzu and the Baby Catcher 'Midwife Meets Motherhood'.** No. 3, 03/03/03. "The Fashion issue" Begins with a report on midwife outfits, followed by 'Zuzu's Guide to Fashion' ("anything with Elmo on it").

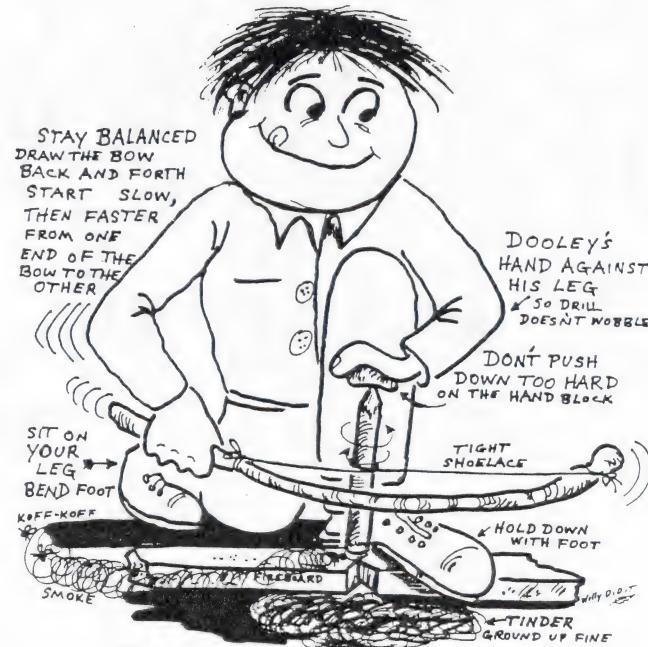




DOOLEY NEXT HOLDS THE HAND BLOCK WITH ONE HAND AND BOW AND DRILL TIGHTLY WITH HIS OTHER HAND, SO THE DRILL DOESN'T FLIP OUT. HE THEN PUTS ONE FOOT ON TOP OF THE FIRE BOARD, ONE FINGER AWAY FROM THE NOTCH.



DOOLEY KNEELS DOWN ON ONE KNEE. HE PUTS THE DENT OF THE HAND BLOCK ON TOP OF THE POINTED END OF THE DRILL AND FITS THE ROUND END OF THE DRILL INTO THE DENT AT THE END OF THE NOTCH IN THE FIRE BOARD.

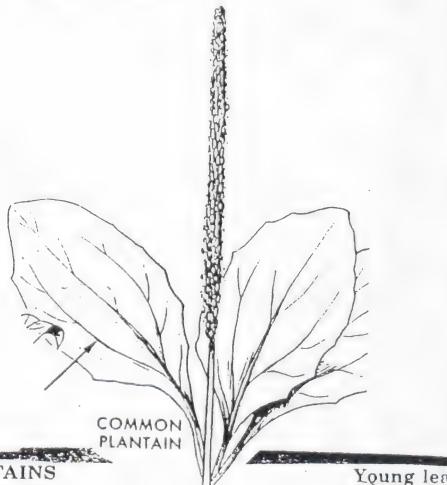


DOOLEY MOVES THE BOW BACK AND FORTH FAST, UNTIL HE MAKES SMOKE AND A LITTLE RED HOT COAL SHOWS UP IN THE NOTCH ...

Parents are cautioned in 'Dangeroustyle' of potentially lethal accessories (warning: ponytail holders worn as bracelets could cut off circulation to your child's hand)

'Sleep' is a very offensive segment about putting Zuzu to bed (after she plays with her CD-ROM of course). My favorite line in the whole zine is her rationalization for weaning Zuzu at 6 months: "*Randy & I decided she was actually too uncomfortable with a belly full of milk to actually sleep well.*" Wow. If only those tens of thousands of children who go to bed hungry every night knew how lucky they are, for they will be getting some very sound sleep. Later when Zuzu was resisting being put in a cage... er, crib... they decided to employ the "*cry it out method*". And for those who wonder why can't children sleep close to their parents/family like we've been doing for millennia? Well according to her you are living in "*Bizarro World!*" '*Playing with Dolls*' is a long polemic basically telling everyone to lay-off Barbie ('cause after all she has been a judge, policewoman, military officer, astronaut, and...wait for it... a presidential candidate. whew!). and that the debate over her unrealistic proportions is pointless when compared to *Groovy Girt, Diva Starz, or Bratz* dolls. However, readers will be

relieved to discover that Barbie's outfits are "*made and sewn of the finest real fabrics*". Hmmm. Interestingly enough, my partner actually worked for Mattel at one point and her job was to stack toys that had been recalled due to safety hazards. Why did she stack them? Well because they were being shipped to other countries with less stringent safety regulations. Yes, only the "*finest*" from Mattel. Lastly '*Is it Worth it?*' examines the \$2.00 price tag for the zine which some consider way too expensive, but she (obviously) considers it worth it. I side with the first group. I can only recommend '*Zuzu and the Baby-Catcher*' to use as kindling for the campfire after taking your youngsters for a wild edible hike.



PLANTAINS

*Plantago* spp.

Low, homely plants. Flowers greenish white, tiny; in t slender heads atop a leafless stem. Leaves in basal rose: Use: Salad, cooked green. Chop and add to salads, or boil 10-15 min. and serve with butter. Collect Common Plan leaves while *very young*; they soon become too stringy to

**EARLY SPRING** (Common P.); **SPRING-SUMMER** (Seaside SEASIDE PLANTAIN, *P. juncoides*). A coastal species v narrow (1 rib), fleshy leaves. 2-8 in. (5-20 cm). Where fou Shores, cliffs. Coast south to N.J. **Flowers:** June-Sept.

**COMMON PLANTAIN**, *P. major*. The familiar lawn w. Leaves broad, ovate, heavily ribbed, with troughlike ste Flowerhead long, very tight. 6-18 in. (15-45 cm). Wh found: Lawns. Throughout. **Flowers:** June-Oct.

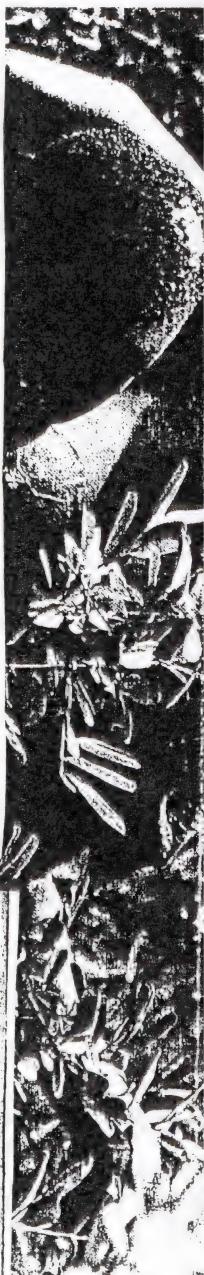
The thesis of this book is that, as a consequence of the unique evolutionary history of our species, we are designed to fulfill the bountiful promise of the child; to grow and develop as children, rather than into the kind of adults we have been taught to believe we ought to become. By this it is not intended to mean that we are programmed to remain arrested at childhood stages of development, but that we are, by every confirmable measure, designed to continue, throughout our lives, to grow and develop in the traits so conspicuously exhibited by the child.

It should, perhaps, be made clear here that in using the term "designed" there is no intention to imply or suggest a "Designer" or "Great Purpose," but rather a pattern of human potentialities that are polymorphously educable, the result of evolutionary processes, clearly directed toward optimum healthy development.

The child, as a growing concern, pleasurable strives to realize itself. Growth is the principal criterion by which we distinguish the living from the nonliving. But whereas in all other sentient organisms growth is at certain stages of development arrested, humans, with relatively few exceptions within the species, are capable of growth, behavioral and spiritual, to the end of their days. The word "spiritual" is here and throughout this book employed not in any religious sense, but as referring to that combination of qualities that make up the person's attitudes of mind toward himself and to the world about him. This is the secular "spirit" of the person and is unrelated to whether or not he subscribes to any religious system. It is—the need to love others and to be loved; the qualities of curiosity, inquisitiveness, thirst for knowledge; the need to learn; imagination, creativity, openmindedness, experimental-mindedness; the sense of humor, playfulness, joy, the optimism, honesty, resilience, and compassionate intelligence—that constitute the spirit of the child. One sees this spirit in action among many so-called "primitive" peoples, who, interestingly enough, have often been called "children of nature," not infrequently with unconcealed admiration. It is probable that it was the preservation of this neotenous spirit throughout the five million or so years of human evolution that contributed in a major way to the survival of our species. In other words, the spirit of the child is, in the profoundest sense,

the spirit of humanity, an adaptive trait of the greatest biological value. It is the omnipotentiality of the child that is so impressive.

It is remarkable how often we speak admiringly of an adult as having "the curiosity of a child," or of "the childlike quality" of a genius or other excelling person, or mention those in whom we simply take delight for "the child in them." I am not speaking of those qualities we visit upon the child and to which we pejoratively refer as "childish," for most of those allegedly childish traits, such as whining, crying, temper tantrums, and the rest, are conditioned in children by the adults whose charges they are. It has been said that humans are the only examples of 150-pound nonlinear servomechanisms that can be wholly reproduced by unskilled labor. In other words, there are many genitors, but few parents. To be a genitor all one needs is to be fertile; to be a



parent one must understand the needs of the child and be willing and able to satisfy them. Without such competencies genitors often, only too often, condition their children in the bad habits in which their own genitors conditioned them. It is in this manner that the cycle of "childish" behavior is perpetuated from generation to generation. And because "bad" behavior in children is widespread, what is more "natural" than to suppose that children are naturally depraved creatures? Such a view of the child is by no means restricted to the layperson. In an address delivered in 1922, and reprinted in his book *The Roots of Crime* in 1970, the doyen of English psychoanalysts, Dr. Edward Glover, wrote of the newborn in these engaging terms:

Expressing these technical discoveries in social terms we can say that the perfectly normal infant is almost completely egocentric, greedy, dirty, violent in temper, destructive in habit, profoundly sexual in purpose, aggrandizing in attitude, devoid of all but the most primitive reality sense, without conscience of moral feeling, whose attitude to society (as represented by the family) is opportunist, inconsiderate, domineering and sadistic. And when we come to consider the criminal type labeled psychopathic it will be apparent that many of these characteristics can under certain circumstances persist into adult life. In fact, judged by adult social standards the normal baby is for all practical purposes a born criminal.

At the close of the lecture in which these profound observations were delivered to the world, Dr. Glover tells us, the lady occupying the chair, Mrs. St. Loe Strachey, a magistrate, protested, "'But, doctor, the dear babies! How could you say such awful things about them?'" No doubt, in his superior wisdom, Dr. Glover smiled benignly, and held his peace, for he does not tell us whether he made any reply.

I do not know whether there are any psychoanalysts today who would subscribe to such extreme views, but to some degree most people even today hold very unsound views concerning the nature of the newborn. The truth is that by far the most overwhelming weight of the evidence of many years of research by literally thousands of investigators all points to the fact that the child is born with all its drives oriented in the direction of growth and fulfillment in health and harmony. And, once again, by health I mean the ability to love, to work, to play, and to think soundly. It is the frustration of the child's needs by his incompetent socializers that is principally responsible for the behavior attributed to innate depravity.

In nonliterate societies "bad" behavior in children is rare. It has often been remarked by anthropologists who have lived among such peoples that one seldom even hears a baby cry, or observes one sucking its thumb, or indulging in aggressive behavior or other forms of conduct we designate "bad." The reason for this is that children in such societies receive a great deal of love. Babies and small children are seldom out of the arms of others, and even young children delight in playing with smaller children and caring for them, carrying them with them wherever they go. Thumbs do not have to be sucked because the breast is always available, and aggressive behavior fails to establish itself because it is neither provoked nor perceived as such, but is treated rather as an occasion for fun; therefore the child receives no training in aggression.

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It took some time before the significance of what I was looking at sank into my "civilized" mind. I had spent more than two years living in the jungles of South America with Stone Age Indians. Little boys traveled with us when we enlisted their fathers as guides and crew, and we often stayed for days or weeks in the villages of the Yequana Indians where the children played all day unsupervised by adults or adolescents. It only struck me after the fourth of my five expeditions that I had never seen a conflict either between two children or between a child and an adult. Not only did the children not hit one another, they did not even argue. They obeyed their elders instantly and cheerfully, and often carried babies around with them while playing or helping with the work.

Where were the "terrible twos"? Where were the tantrums, the struggle to "get their own way," the selfishness, the destructiveness and carelessness of their own safety that we call normal? Where was the nagging, the discipline, the "boundaries" needed to curb their contrariness? Where, indeed, was the adversarial relationship we take for granted between parent and child? Where was the blaming, the punishing, or for that matter, where was any sign of permissiveness?

### The Yequana Way

There is a Yequana expression equivalent to "Boys will be boys"; it has a positive connotation, however, and refers to the boys' high spirits as they run about and whoop and swim in the river or play Yequana badminton (a noncompetitive game in which all players keep the cornhusk shuttlecock in the air as long as possible by batting it with open hands). I heard many shouts and much laughter when the boys played outdoors, yet the moment they were inside the huts, they lowered their voices to maintain the reigning quiet. They never interrupted an adult conversation. In fact, they rarely spoke at all in the company of adults, confining themselves to listening and performing little services such as passing around food or drink.

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Far from being disciplined or suppressed into compliant behavior, these little angels are relaxed and cheerful. And they grow up to be happy, confident, cooperative adults!

How do they do it? What do the Yequana know about human nature that we do not? What can we do to attain non-adversarial relationships with our children in toddlerhood, or later if they have got off to a bad start?

### The "Civilized" Experience

In my private practice, people consult me to overcome the deleterious effects of beliefs about themselves formed in childhood.<sup>1</sup> Many of these people are parents keen not to subject their offspring to the kind of alienation they suffered at the hands of their own usually well-meaning parents. They would like to know how they can rear their children happily and painlessly.

Most of these parents have taken my advice and, following the Yequana example, kept their babies in physical contact all day and night until they began to crawl.<sup>2</sup> Some, however, are surprised and dismayed to find their tots becoming "demanding" or angry — often toward their most caretaking parent. No amount of dedication or self-sacrifice improves the babies' disposition. Increased efforts to placate them do nothing but augment frustration in both parent and child. Why, then, do the Yequana not have the same experience?

The crucial difference is that the Yequana are not child-centered. They may occasionally nuzzle their babies affectionately, play peek-a-boo, or sing to them, yet the great majority of the caretaker's time is spent paying attention to something else...not the baby! Children taking care of babies also regard baby care as a non-activity and, although they carry them everywhere, rarely give them direct attention. Thus, Yequana babies find themselves in the midst of activities they will later join as they proceed through the

stages of creeping, crawling, walking, and talking. The panoramic view of their future life's experiences, behavior, pace, and language provides a rich basis for their developing participation.

Being played with, talked to, or admired all day deprives the babe of this in-arms spectator phase that would feel right to him. Unable to say what he needs, he will act out his discontentment. He is trying to get his caretaker's attention, yet — and here is the cause of the understandable confusion — his purpose is to get the caretaker to change his unsatisfactory experience, to go about her own business with confidence and without seeming to ask his permission. Once the situation is corrected, the attention-getting behavior we mistake for a permanent impulse can subside. The same principle applies in the stages following the in-arms phase.

One devoted mother on the East Coast, when beginning sessions with me on the telephone, was near the end of her tether. She was at war with her beloved three-year-old son, who was often barging into her, sometimes hitting her, and shouting, "Shut up!" among other distressing expressions of anger and disrespect. She had tried reasoning with him, asking him what he wanted her to do, bribing him, and speaking sweetly as long as she could before losing her patience and shouting at him. Afterward, she would be consumed with guilt and try to "make it up to him" with apologies, explanations, hugs, or special treats to prove her love — whereupon her precious little boy would respond by issuing new ill-tempered demands.

Sometimes she would stop trying to please him and go tight-lipped about her own activities, despite his howls and protestations. If she finally managed to hold out long enough for him to give up trying to control her and calm down, he might gaze up at her out of his meltingly beautiful eyes and say, "I love you, Mommy!" and she, almost abject in her gratitude for this momentary reprieve from the leaden guilt in her bosom, would soon be eating out of his dimpled, jam-stained little hand again. He would become bossy, then angry and rude, and the whole heartbreakng scenario would be replayed, whereupon my client's despair would deepen.

I hear many similar stories from clients in the United States, Canada, Germany, and England, so I believe it is fair to say that this trouble is prevalent among the most well-educated, well-meaning parents in Western societies. They are struggling with children who seem to want to keep their adults under their control and obedient to their every whim. To make matters worse, many people believe that this phenomenon bears witness to the widely held notion that our species, alone among all creatures, is by nature antisocial and requires years of opposition ("discipline," "socializing") to become viable, or "good." As the Yequana, the Balinese, and numerous other peoples outside our cultural orbit reveal, however, such a notion is utterly erroneous. Members of one society respond to the conditioning of their culture like the members of any other.

### The Way to Harmony

What, then, is causing this unhappiness? What have we misunderstood about our human nature? And what can we do to approach the harmony the Yequana enjoy with their children?

It appears that many parents of toddlers, in their anxiety to be neither negligent nor disrespectful, have gone overboard in what may seem to be the other direction. Like the thankless martyrs of the in-arms stage, they have become centered upon their children instead of being occupied by adult activities that the children can watch, follow, imitate, and assist in as is their natural tendency. In other words, because a toddler wants to learn what his people do, he expects to be able to center his attention on an adult who is centered on her own business. An adult who stops whatever she is doing and tries to ascertain what her child wants her to do is short-circuiting this expectation. Just as significantly, she appears to the tot not to know how to behave, to be lacking in confidence and, even more alarmingly, looking for guidance from him, a two or three year old who is relying on her to be calm, competent, and sure of herself.

A toddler's fairly predictable reaction to parental uncertainty is to push his parents even further off-balance, testing for a place where they will stand firm and thus allay his anxiety about who is in charge. He may continue to draw pictures on the wall after his mother has pleaded with him to desist, in

an apologetic voice that lets him know she does not believe he will obey. When she then takes away his markers, all the while showing fear of his wrath, he — as surely as he is a social creature — meets her expectations and flies into a screaming rage.

If misreading his anger, she tries even harder to ascertain what he wants, pleads, explains, and appears ever more desperate to placate him, the child will be impelled to make more outrageous, more unacceptable demands. This he must continue to do until at last she does take over leadership and he can feel that order is restored. He may still not have a calm, confident, reliable authority figure to learn from, as his mother is now moving from the point of losing her temper to the point at which guilt and doubts about her competence are again rearing their wobbly heads. Nevertheless, he will have the meager reassurance of seeing that when the chips were down, she did relieve him of command and of his panicky feeling that he should somehow know what she should do.

Put simply, when a child is impelled to try to control the behavior of an adult, it is not because the child wants to succeed, but because the child needs to be certain that the adult knows what he or she is doing. Furthermore, the child cannot resist such testing until the adult stands firm and the child can have that certainty. No child would dream of trying to take over the initiative from an adult unless that child receives a clear message that such action is expected — not wanted, but expected! Moreover, once the child feels he has attained control, he becomes confused and frightened and must go to any extreme to compel the adult to take the leadership back where it belongs.

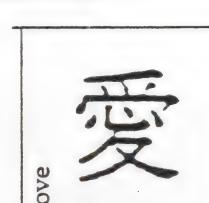
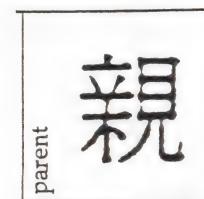
When this is understood, the parents' fear of imposing upon their child is allayed, and they see that there is no call for adversariality. By maintaining control, they are fulfilling their beloved child's needs, rather than acting in opposition to them.

It took my East Coast client a week or two to see the first results of this new understanding. After that, generations of misunderstanding and the force of old habits rendered the family's transition to non-adversarial ways somewhat uneven. Today, she and her husband, as well as many of my other clients similarly afflicted, are happily convinced by their own experience that children, far from being contrary, are by nature profoundly social.

Expecting them to be so is what allows them to be so. As the parents' expectation of sociality in the child is perceived by the child, she or he meets that expectation; likewise, the parents' experience of sociality in the child reinforces their expectation of it. That is how it works. In a gracious letter to me, the husband of my East Coast client wrote, of his wife, their son, and himself: "[We] have grown and learned and loved together in a miraculous way. Our relationships continue to evolve in a totally positive and loving direction."

#### Notes

1. Jean Liedloff, Normal Neurotics Like Us, *Mothering*, no. 61 (Fall 1991): 32-27.
2. Jean Liedloff, The Importance of the In-Arms Phase, *Mothering*, no. 50 (Winter 1989): 16-19.



## THE AMERICANIZATION OF INDIAN GOVERNMENTS

The United States had a big headache. We wanted to get at the gold, coal, oil, copper, tin, minerals, and land. We wanted to work things out with the Indians but it was difficult to deal with nations that had no central authorities, no one to make binding decisions for the whole population. It was hard to find out where all the people met and who was in charge. Who could sign on the dotted line? These governments, such as they were, were so very slow, and they operated by "natural laws" that were immutable; and they viewed the land as Being or Spirit, never to be sold or bartered. It was clear the situation needed to change, and we set out to do that in a variety of ways. It began with the children.

### Step 1. Removal of the Children

The United States undertook the forced removal of Indian children from their families, and placed them in distant boarding schools, for "the benefit of the Indians." We argued that this would help the children break away from boundaries of a culture that diminished the children's ability *and desire* to partake in American society. In each part of the country, the policy was executed in slightly different ways. Among the Hopi, it began in the 1880s when the cavalry moved the kids to BIA schools at Kearns Canyon, Arizona. There the Hopi children were forbidden to speak the Hopi language, to wear Hopi clothes, or to keep their traditional long-haired styles. They were given English names to replace their Hopi names and all Hopi customs were outlawed. All Hopi children were required to undergo religious indoctrination, much of it by Mormons. (Mormonism is now the dominant religion among the "progressive" [non-traditional] Hopi.)

Mormonism teaches, among other things, that dark skin is a punishment from God. The *Book of Mormon* says, ". . . after they [the Indians] had dwindled in unbelief, they became a dark, and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations." If Indians accept

the Mormon church, however, ". . . many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightsome people." In other words, accept Mormonism and you start turning white.

When Hopi parents resisted sending their kids to schools, the cavalry tore the children from their parents' arms and then arrested the parents. This policy continued into the 1930s.

The forced separation of Indian children from their parents was very successful from the United States' point of view. It created a whole generation of Indians trained to hate their Indian-ness, and indoctrinated them with American religious, social, and economic values. These children were the Indians the United States would later reward with "tribal leadership."



"Just last year I came across something written by eighteenth-century explorer Samuel Hearne, the first white man to explore northern Canada. He described Indian children playing with wolf pups. The children would paint the pups' faces with vermillion or red ochre, and, when they were done playing with them, return them unhurt to the den. Neither the pups nor the adult wolves seemed to mind at all." Derrick Jensen 'Enemy of the State: Interview with John Zerzan'



"We had many curious wild pets. There were young foxes, bears, wolves, raccoons, fawns, buffalo calves and birds of all kinds, tamed by various boys. My pets were different at different times, but I particularly remember one. I one had a grizzly bear for a pet and so far as he and I were concerned, our relations were charming and very close. But I hardly know whether he made more enemies for me or I for him. It was his habit to treat every boy unmercifully who injured me. He was despised for his conduct in my interest and I was hated on account of his interference." - Hakadah (Sioux)/Charles Eastman 'Indian Boyhood'

Jamestown founder William Strachey reported that some Powhatan Indians placed tiny live snakes in their earlobes.  
Kaj Birket-Smith 'Primitive Man and His Way'



ABOVE: Dogs are so valuable to the Jivaros that, when this puppy's mother was killed by a jaguar, an Indian mother took it to nurse along with her own baby.

I haven't seen a mountain lion since that evening, but the experience remains shining in my memory. I want my children to have the opportunity for that kind of experience. I want my friends to have it. I want our enemies to have it - they need it most. And someday, possibly, one of our children's children will discover how to get close enough to that mountain lion to shake paws with it, to embrace and caress it, maybe even teach it something, and to learn what the lion has to teach us. -  
Edward Abbey 'Freedom and Wilderness, Wilderness and Freedom'

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1-866-460-2945 (toll free)

recommended reading...

(this is only a partial list of books that parents might find of interest. a subsequent listing of radical books for children will be featured in the next issue. feel free to send in any recommendations or reviews)

books:

continuum concept - jean liedloff

99% of our history has "prepared" us to expect a wild uncivilized environment, when a child is born into a civilized world s/he experiences trauma via patriarchy, mediation, domestication, industrialization, etc.

my name is chellis - chellis glendinning & a language older than words - derrick jensen

authors' personal accounts of child abuse and it's relation to the civilizing process and the dominant culture

diaper free! - ingrid bauer

how to raise your young'un with out diapers. could be effectively summed-up in a pamphlet, but worth reading anyway.

growing young - ashley montague

modern adults are merely deformed children...

ishmael, my ishmael, story of b - daniel quinn

a clever way of introducing a critique of civilization to those who wouldn't otherwise attempt such blasphemy

games of the north american indians -stewart cullin

the most comprehensive collection of native games and toys available

foxfire book of appalachian toys and games - smith & page

great collection of old-thyme toys that can be easily made of local, organic material

botany in a day - thomas j. elpel

one of the best books introducing botany to a novice or youth. Must have

modern school movement - paul avrich

in-depth account of the fransisco ferrer-inspired anarchist/libertarian school, it's origins, faculty, and ultimate disbanding

from child to adult - edited by john middleton

"studies in the anthropology of education" various authors' reports of education within indigenous communities covering the Tikopia, Chaga, Hopi, Wogeo, Papago, Mende, and Silwa among others

tom brown's field guide to nature and survival for children - tom brown

focuses on teaching respect for nature through various survival skills and games

sharing nature with children 1 & 2 - joseph cornell

dozens of activities designed to encourage direct experience with the natural world. arranged according to concepts, place, numbers, age, etc.

women as mothers - sheila kitzinger

cross-cultural examination of "motherhood" with fascinating detail of reproduction, birth, ritual and technology

MagaZines:

Primitive Archer [www.primitivearcher.com](http://www.primitivearcher.com)

Wilderness Way [www.wwmag.net](http://www.wwmag.net)

Bulletin of Primitive Technology [www.primitive.org](http://www.primitive.org)

Feral Forager [www.wildroots.org](http://www.wildroots.org)

Weeping Willow [www.coalitionagainstcivilization.org](http://www.coalitionagainstcivilization.org)

Reclaim/Rewild [www.rewild.org](http://www.rewild.org)

DISTRO [www.re-pressed.org.uk](http://www.re-pressed.org.uk)

DISTRO [www.greenanarchy.org](http://www.greenanarchy.org)

DISTRO [www.blackandgreen.org](http://www.blackandgreen.org)





wild child distro

(BPT articles \$1 each)

Teaching Primitive Skills to Children - Wanda DeWaard  
Creating a Low-Tech Atlatl - Charles Spear

Sharing Oldways With the Young - Norm Kidder

Floating with the Handdrill by Chris Morasky

What to Teach Kids and Why - Dick Baugh

Awakening the Primal Storyteller - Robin Moore

The Bowdrill Fire for Young Kids - Robin Moore

Ashcakes - Thomas J. Elpel

Primitive Skills in Today's Schools - Maria Sideroff

Rudimentary "Fist" Pottery - Charles Spear

Teach Primitive Skills to Kids Through Scouting - Evard Gibby

The Underlying Survival Skills of Teaching - Ricardo Sierra

The Amazing Coal-Burned Spoon - Ricardo Sierra

Basic Mat-Making for Children - Jeff Gottlieb

Buckskins For Beginners - She'ome Walker Rose

Baby Carrying by Carrie Ryan

(essays \$2 each)

The Continuum Concept - Jean Liedloff

Natural Infant Hygiene: Alternative to Diapers - Ingrid Bauer

Society Against the State - Pierre Clastres

In Search Of The Primitive - Stanley Diamond

The Original Affluent Society - Marshall Sahlins

A Map - Chellis Glendinning

A Lesson in Earth Civics - Chellis Glendinning

Code of Student Resistance: Surviving, Escaping, and Unlearning School (\$3)

As Soon as You're Born You're Made to Feel Small (\$3)

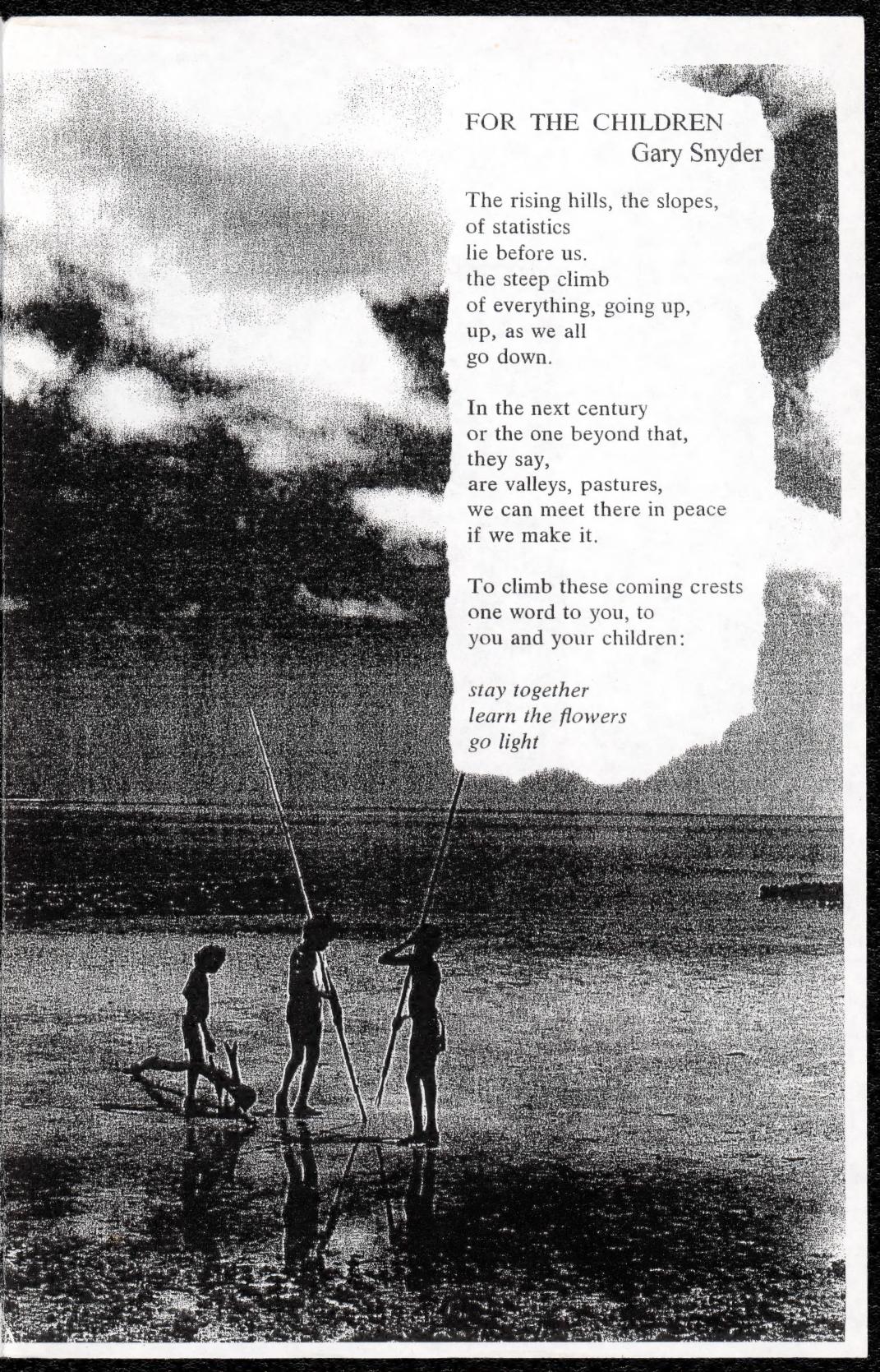
(videos \$15 each)

Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh - Helena Norberg Hodge

N!ai: The Story of a !Kung Woman - John Marshall

Four Families - Margaret Mead

contact: primalparent@hotmail.com



FOR THE CHILDREN  
Gary Snyder

The rising hills, the slopes,  
of statistics  
lie before us.  
the steep climb  
of everything, going up,  
up, as we all  
go down.

In the next century  
or the one beyond that,  
they say,  
are valleys, pastures,  
we can meet there in peace  
if we make it.

To climb these coming crests  
one word to you, to  
you and your children:

*stay together  
learn the flowers  
go light*

